

THE MARTYR MONTHLY

**St. Stephen the Martyr
Lutheran Church, ELCA**
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Worship With Us—All Are Welcome!
Sunday – 8:00 am & 9:30 am
Saturday - 5 pm



Lenten Schedule

Ash Wednesday, March 1, 7:00 p.m.

Communion & Imposition of Ashes

No soup supper on Ash Wednesday

6 p.m. Soup Suppers

7 p.m. Worship Service/Drama

Wednesday, March 8

Wednesday, March 15

Wednesday, March 22

Wednesday, March 29

Wednesday, April 5

You are invited to gather for a Soup Supper before the Wednesday Evening Lenten Worship Services. Please sign up on the poster in the narthex if you plan to attend and note whether you'll be bringing soup, bread or salad.

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NEW MEMBER CLASS COMING SOON

CLASS BEGINS SATURDAY, MARCH 11TH

If you know someone who would like to explore the Lutheran traditions through Martin Luther's Small Catechism and make a commitment to becoming a member of St. Stephen the Martyr, please contact me, or simply invite them to the new member class beginning Saturday, March 11 at 3:30p.m. in the Luther Room (rear classroom) The class will meet for five Saturdays.

We will welcome our new members on Sunday, April 23rd at the 9:30 service.

~ Pastor Gail





Lent is the Church's 'springtime'. Out of the cold and darkness of sin's winter emerges the Body of Christ—His people ready to be re-born. Lent is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "spring."

Although Easter is the oldest Christian season, the observance of Lent appeared between 200-300 A.D. Lent was a time of preparation for those taking instruction in the Christian faith before their baptism.

Today, Lent calls us to take time out and look at our life. How are we doing, we who have died to sin and have come alive to new life in Christ. In repentance, we ask our Lord to clear our hearts and lives to sin's self-centeredness.

Ash Wednesday is March 1st this year. We will gather together at 7:00 p.m. to receive ashes on our foreheads, remembering that we have only so much time on this earth, and it matters very much what we do with that time. We will receive Holy Communion with joy and gratitude, and remember what Jesus Christ did with His time on this earth!

Worship on the following four Wednesdays will include the beautiful "Holden Evening Prayer" liturgy begun last year, and will feature "Dialogues of Christ's Passion" called "From My Point Of View". We will hear from:

John the Evangelist-March 8th

The Apostle Peter-March 15th

Mary Magdalene-March 22nd

Nicodemus & Joseph Of Arimethea-March 29th

On **Wednesday, April 5th**, we will have the opportunity to hear **Attorney Ralph Raasch speak on "The Trials Of Jesus"**, an informative, thoughtful presentation

on the dramatic and tragic trials that cost Jesus his life.

On April 8 and 9, Palm/Passion weekend, **"The Cry Of The Whole Congregation"**, a dramatic reading of the last week of Jesus' life will involve all worshippers.

This Lent, come Wednesdays and Sundays. Come and worship our loving and merciful God. Spend an hour in the company of our Savior who stretches out His hands to sinners, the One who dies for us and all people, who brings forgiveness and life and hope!

Your partner in the Gospel,

THE NEXT 40 YEARS—A REPORT FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Hello everyone. I would like to share my comments from our recent annual meeting with the entire congregation. We have a GREAT future. ~ Bill

"When Pastor Gail was about to join our congregation, she asked me if I felt that our best years were behind us, or ahead of us. Ask yourself that same question right now, are our best years behind us, or ahead of us?"

St Stephen the Martyr has had a wonderful 40 years. As a congregation we have cared for each other, our community, and the world. Across 40 years, members of our congregation have shared the joys of being a community of Christ, we have met the challenges when asked, we have welcomed new member to our caring community, we have sadly said goodbye to others. We have smiled at the memories of those who have meant so much to our Church.

Our best years are ahead of us, there is no question in my mind. I believe that St Stephen the Martyr is in the best place that it has ever been.

Pastor Gail made mention of many of the wonderful projects carried out by you and others to celebrate our 40 years together.

We have a rich history of caring for others. Last year our congregation gave over \$57,000 to benevolence, up over 30% in just two years. Thank you for your generosity... Our Synod leadership recognizes that we are among the leaders in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Let's celebrate what we have done for others. We can do even more in 2006.

New members continue to find a warm, welcoming home at St Stephen the Martyr. Increasingly our newer members have become active in the Church. We are seeing a new generation of leadership step forward to guide us into the future.

I have never seen as much activity over a summer as happened in 2005. Our people are committed to practicing their faith, not just attending worship services. There is energy here that people can feel.

We have taken the first very necessary step to increase our professional staff to support our growth and active programs. Kevan Penrose is tirelessly helping our volunteers to build our youth and family ministry.

A year ago we committed to some aggressive financial goals to support our future. We have met those goals. In fact, our Church has never been in better financial condition to support the good work that we do.

Work continues on planning for future space needs. We have conducted a very preliminary space needs analysis. The mortgage reduction fund we voted in a year ago has given us the opportunity to lower our mortgage, so that when it does become necessary to add to our building, we will be financially ready.

It has been a great 40 years. The next 40 years will be even better. My challenge to each of you is simple. Stay active, stay generous, stay committed.

Thank you for all that you do. May the peace of the Lord be with you all."

HUMAN CONCERNS

FOOD PANTRY

Food donated this month will go to serve the Cristo Rey/Faith Lutheran Food Pantry. Please bring in brown paper grocery bags also. Pick up a flyer on the office bulletin board.

MT. MERU COFFEE UPDATE

Mt. Meru Coffee from our sister diocese in Tanzania is available in the narthex. There are bags on the table that may be purchased, or if you don't find what you need, you can order it on the order form. The coffee is delivered to the church by Thursday or Friday. Each 12 oz. bag costs \$8.00, which is paid at the time of your order.

~Doing Justice Never Tasted So Good!~

FAITH PRODUCES ACTION

James 2:14-17 (NIV) ¹⁴ "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if a person claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

James' illustration was of meeting physical needs. We can tell a person to be fed and clothed, but it does no good unless we take some kind of action to see that they receive the food and clothes they need. The analogy is that saying we have faith means nothing unless it is evidenced by works.

James is telling us that genuine faith must result in actions. We can't separate the two. Works do not save us, but they will accompany true faith.

Point to Ponder: Is your faith alive? Is there enough evidence in your life to convict you of being a Christian?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

On Super Bowl Sunday, St. Stephen members were asked to donate a minimum of \$1 to ELCA World Hunger. With churches around the land, the annual campaign called SOUPER BOWL OF CARING got a generous response.

St. Stephen the Martyr members gave \$416.85. Thank you very much for caring in a real way for hungry people around the world. Your caring does make a difference!

1ST FRIDAY POTLUCK

For all those who would like to enjoy some good food and the fellowship of other members, another potluck is on the agenda for **Friday, March 3rd at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall**. Menu items will be needed, except coffee and soda which will be provided.

While all members are welcome, **those who live alone are especially invited**. All ages are welcome to eat together and enjoy conversation. We would like you to bring a favorite joke or humorous story to share.

Please sign up for the meal on the bulletin board next to the church office door, and let us know what you will bring.

DON'T LOOK DISMAL DURING LENT

As we March through Lent, pay attention to the Wind (the Biblical word for Wind is *Spirit*), which comes in like a lion (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) and goes out like a lamb (the Lamb of God).

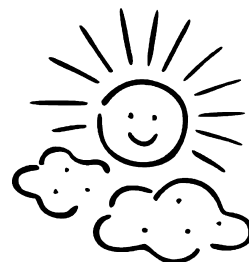
“Many Christians spend the six weeks before Easter observing Lent. Too few celebrate it... Many of my brothers and sisters observe Lent by looking dismal. Dismal is not what Lent is about.

“Lent is short for *lengthen*, an Old English word that reminds us that the days are getting longer, and the spring is coming. Lent is meant to remind us that the days are getting longer—indeed, stretching to eternity—and that the King is coming!

“This is Lent. Celebrate it with your family and friends. Celebrate it through your actions and words. Serve it for breakfast, lunch and supper. Serve it with a smile.

“Face the Wind. You will soon discover it’s a breeze!”

- by Rev. Paul Lintern, from the *Joyful Noiseletter*



Vacation Bible Time Is Coming!
And it's going to be a Fiesta!
Where kids are fired up about
Jesus!



Mark your calendars now for
our all new Vacation Bible
Time this summer!

Dates: July 17-21st

SUBSCRIBE TO THE LUTHERAN MAGAZINE

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America publishes a monthly magazine that is filled with news concerning the ministries of the church, devotional pieces, articles about youth in the church, a question and answer column by theologians, and even church humor on the “Lighter Side” page.

If you haven’t already done so, you can subscribe for \$15.95 a year by writing: The Lutheran Circulation, c/o Augsburg Fortress, PO Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8730. It’s a good way to keep informed on the happenings in the ELCA.

CONFIRMATION STUDENTS

A reminder that Lent begins Wednesday, March 1st with Ash Wednesday services. Students will attend services for six Wednesdays, instead of Thursday classes until the week after Easter which is April 16th this year. There will be a sign-in sheet on the kiosk each Wednesday.

7th and 8th grade classes resume again on Thursday, April 27th @ 7:00pm. at St. Stephen the Martyr!

STEWARDSHIP NOTES

First Fruits

"Thou shalt not delay [to offer] the *first of thy ripe fruits,*" (Exodus 22:29)

The Bible tells us in several places that we should be giving the first fruits of our labors back to God. It is the belief that the first — hence the best — yield of the earth is due to God as an acknowledgment of His blessings to us. Leviticus 23:39 and Deuteronomy 26:2 are just a couple of additional references.

But how easy is it to really give the first portion of our income to the church? I get a pay statement twice each month, and looking at the details of that, I find that before I get anything, a large portion of what I make goes to things like State and Federal taxes and Social Security. But those aren't the "first fruits" - my pay statement also includes items under a category called "Before Tax Deductions". These include payments for health care, dental and my 401K. Oops, looks like all of those first fruits are going to me!

So how can I be sure that God isn't just getting the leftovers once I bring home my paycheck? One way is through my weekly or monthly pledge to St. Stephen the Martyr. Making a commitment helps to insure that I am thinking of supporting the mission of SSM first. Did you know that while we gave out 300 boxes of envelopes this year, we only received 132 pledges? It seems to me that we can do better here.

One way we can be sure about giving first fruits, is to arrange to have our gifts to SSM deducted directly from our bank account and transferred to SSM.

"Simply Giving" is an electronic funds giving program that costs our church nothing yet helps to insure that our gifts are made even when we are absent for a week or two.

If you are interested, check with the Financial Secretary, Betty Kroll for details.

Finally, with this being the tax season, while you are preparing your 1040 form, it is a good time to check out what percent of your income was given to the church. How do you compare to a tithe (tenth)? How do you compare to what you did last year? Let's honor God with our best!

FAMILY STEWARDSHIP

- * By the time your children are in confirmation class they have already established their giving habits and use of their time and talents.
- * Be sure to be with them early encouraging and setting an example by sharing with them your stewardship each time you make an envelope offering.
- * By sharing with your children your relationship to Jesus and his church they will [prayerfully] follow in your footsteps.

~ The Stewardship Committee



MUSIC AND WORSHIP NOTES



EASTER BREAKFAST NEWS

Join Our Annual Fellowship Celebration of the Resurrection

There will be an organizational meeting to plan for the Easter Breakfast on Sunday, March 5th, in the church sanctuary immediately after the second worship service. People who would like to work for the breakfast in some capacity, and be a part of this traditional event, are encouraged to attend this meeting.

Thanks, Bob Rasmussen, Coordinator



COMING SOON!

WATCH FOR THE EASTER FLOWER POSTER IN THE NARTHEX.

CHRISTMAS NEWS IN MARCH?

Even as our committee looks ahead toward Lent and Easter, we are also looking at a trend in the past few years concerning sparse attendance at the later Christmas Eve service. The same pattern has occurred at St. Luke's in Greendale. As a committee, we wonder if our 11:00 pm Christmas Eve service is too late. *We are receptive to your opinions in this regard.* Perhaps a 9:00, 9:30, or 10:00 candlelight service would be desirable. Maybe 2006 with Christmas Eve on Sunday is a time to try out a new service time.

WE HOPE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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Our Lenten Wednesdays will again include the Holden Evening Prayer Service as well as narratives from "From My Point of View" by Rolland R. Reese. The final Wednesday we will have a special speaker.

The Music and Worship committee meeting will move to March 2nd due to the Ash Wednesday service. We are refreshing our thoughts on worship by studying "With the Whole Church". Many hands and ideas are always needed by our committee. We welcome all who want to help.

Getting Ready for Easter

As the preparations for Easter continue, there is an immediate need for ushers for the Passion Week services and the three Services on Easter Sunday. If you can help, call Bob Rasmussen (414) 421-5170.

HAVE YOU NOTICED?!?!

A **new cabinet** is being constructed in the Fellowship Hall. Jay Chadwick, Ron Ropel and Dick Rutzen have been busy cutting lumber to make the long awaited Music and Worship storage area. Bob Rasmussen's design includes space for the paraments and other worship items. The newly acquired handbells will also be stored in the lockable lower section. The Music and Worship Committee is very grateful for this effort. Thank you!

Memorial Day Weekend—Sunday, May 28th, we will have one service at 9:30 a.m. Sunday School will meet for the last time until Fall on the following Sunday, June 4th.

Summer Schedule begins June 11th—One Sunday service at 9 a.m. Saturday services continue as usual.

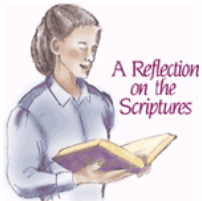
Karen Rasmussen,

Music and Worship, chairperson

SSM WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY— LOOSE ENDS LUNCHEON

The Next Women's Bible Studies will meet
at 10:15 on
March 8 & 22nd.



All are invited to come as we study the following Sunday's Scripture texts.

This month's "Loose Ends" luncheon will be held following the Bible Study on March 8th. Location is the Branded Steer on 13th & College Ave. We will meet at 11:45 at the restaurant or carpool from church at 11:30. If you will be attending, please sign up on the kiosk in the narthex by Sunday, March 5, indicating if you will need a ride.

Please call Nancy Hoffman with any questions: 414-529-0552.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

COMING EVENTS:

Cluster Meeting

April 1, 2006 at Luther Manor 4545 North 92nd Street

Pastor Susan Lindberg and her husband, Richard, will present the Bible Study and slide/video program of Namibia. The cost is \$9 and includes a noon lunch. Registration forms are posted on the kiosk. *Note: Registration Deadline – March 22, 2006*

Greater Milwaukee Synod Spring Retreat

May 6, 2006 at Luther Manor

Information and Registration forms will be posted on the kiosk when available.

We hope you can join us for one or both of these events. Any questions? Contact Carole Ropel at 262-523-4130.



STOREROOM CLEANUP: Help Wanted!

We are in the process of cleaning the storeroom off the kitchen. If anyone has any boxes or items stored there, please sort and label or discard unwanted materials by **MARCH 15th**. Questions? Contact Carol Birk (421-6162) or Toni Wilson (421-9496).

CONDENSED MINUTES OF COUNCIL MTG.—FEBRUARY 14, 2006

(A complete set of Minutes can be found on the Bulletin Board in the Narthex.)

All Council members were present except B. Gleason & J. Lubus. Pastor Gail and Kevan Penrose were present. **Approvals:** The Secretary's Minutes from the January 10, 2006 Council Meeting were approved. C. Ropel read a thank you letter from Gary Heath, President of Christos, acknowledging SSM's gift of \$300. The Financial Secretary's Report was reviewed. A significant difference in the percentage of giving was noted between this report & that of the Treasurer. The difference will be investigated. J. Bugajski noted that the Treasurer's books were audited & found to be in good order. It was moved, seconded & approved to accept the Treasurer's Report. **Pastor's Time:** Lent begins March 1, Ash Wednesday. The Holden Evening Prayer service & short dramas will be featured. Atty. Ralph Raasch will share his knowledge & research on the trials of Jesus on the last Wednesday in Lent. Pastor has been attending Cristo Rey's Advisory Board meetings. They now have a satellite church in Waukesha. Their children have been invited to again participate in our Vacation Bible Time. Mike Yeutter, SSM member & student at UW-Madison, will attend a Mission Trip sponsored by Lutheran Campus Ministries during his spring break. It was moved, seconded & approved to send \$400 to UW in payment of Mike's expenses for the trip. Council members are encouraged to attend the Greater Milwaukee Synod Congregational Leaders Event on March 18 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls. Our Synod Bishop requests congregational involvement in the ELCA World Hunger campaign to raise \$10 per member in the Synod. Letters will be sent to our members. New member classes will begin on March 11. **Old Action Items:** The Council felt the **Annual Meeting** went well. Thanks to T. Falksen for preparing the PowerPoint presentation. Attendance was 85 compared to 68

in 2005. **New Action Items:** The Council watched a 14 minute CD about the **Heifer Project**. It was very informative & Human Concerns will arrange to have it shown to the Congregation. A letter was received requesting that the **soda machine** be removed from the Fellowship Hall. It is used very little, takes up space, is not nutritional, and is noisy. After discussion it was moved, seconded and approved to have the machine removed. B. Gray discussed the Council nominating process. Five terms are expiring. The Nomination Committee will seek replacements from the membership. A congregational meeting to elect Council members will be held on April 30 with installation May 20-21. **Committee Highlights:** **Fellowship:** An Intergenerational Event will be held on March 5, 2-5 p.m. Games, movies & other activities are planned. **Christian Ed:** Vacation Bible Time is July 17-22 & End-of-Year celebration is June 4. **Youth & Family Ministries:** Youth Bible Study begins April 8. The **Youth** group will again have a 30 hour Famine Retreat on April 28-29. **Human Concerns:** \$5 Coupon Books for the benefit of Interfaith will be sold for the remainder of February. A \$10 Boston Store voucher to be used on March 4 is included. **Property:** Estimates for upper parking lot are being obtained. Cost about \$30,000. Congregation may be asked to approve a loan since we cannot put off this repair. **Women-ELCA-Loose Ends** has contributed \$300 each to Broom Tree Ministries, Sojourner Truth House & ELCA-Water for Life Project. The Cook Book Committee & Loose Ends have purchased a second refrigerator for the church. **Adjournment:** 9:10 p.m. Next meeting, March 14, 2006.

Respectfully submitted: Carole Rapel, Council Secretary