

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

News & Notes

3510 72ND STREET, URBANDALE, IA 50322 | 515-276-4628 | www.ststephenlutheran.org

From the Pastor

Isaiah 40:8 - "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God will stand forever!"

Dear Family and Friends of St. Stephen Lutheran Church, I trust your summer is going well. It's always a pleasure to get outside and explore the wonders of God's creation. I have a camper that I pull behind my little truck; and my wife and I will be part of a camping tour that will explore the national parks of the southwest. I also hope to get in a little time on my bike, do some canoeing, and backpack a section of the Appalachian Trail.

But all that play time comes at a cost. I will complete my time here at St. Stephen very soon. My last Sunday with you will be August 2nd. The good news is that Pastor Rachel Mithelman will return to fill the pulpit during August. Pastor Andrea continues to update us on her health; and we pray that her health will allow her to return sometime this fall. Who knows? I may show up a Sunday or two down the road!

However, let me say "Thank you". The people of St. Stephen Lutheran Church have provided a wonderful opportunity for me to work among you and learn from you. I have been richly blessed by your presence in my life. God is so good!

The verse I shared from Isaiah 40 is a gentle reminder that pastors will come and go; but the one constant through it all is that God's Word will stand forever! And that is what we cling to in the midst of all the changes we experience in this life.

I pray that God will continue to pour out His richest blessings upon this place and its people.

Thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege of serving as your interim pastor. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your family. God has been good indeed!

Living in God's Amazing Grace!

Pastor Mark



Around the Church

Baptisms at St. Stephen



On May 3, we celebrated the baptism of Michael Rawson, and on June 14, Ayla Williams!

Stained Glass Dedication



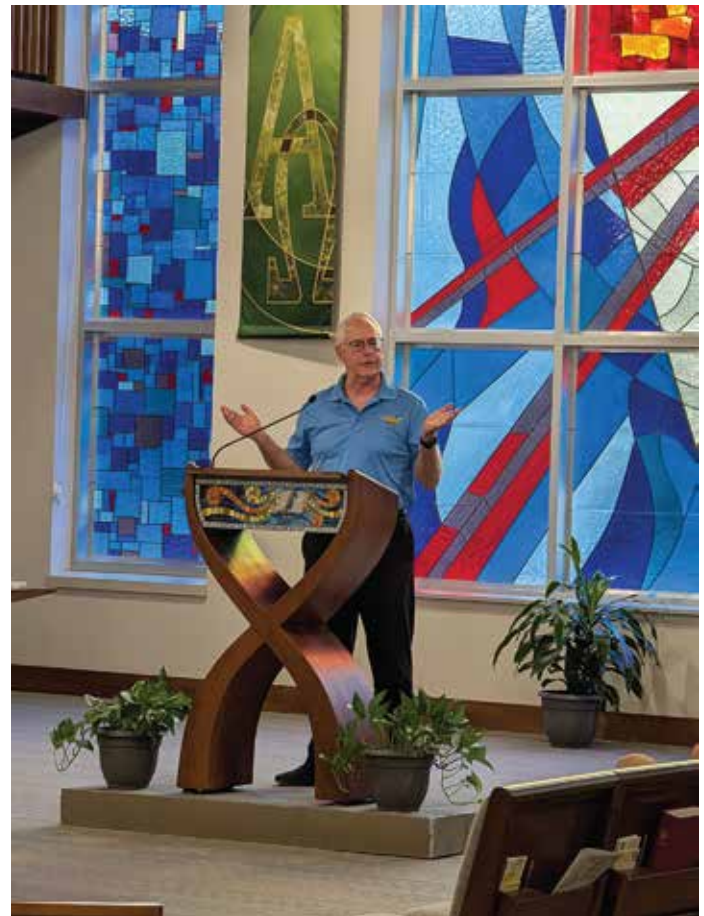
On May 31, we dedicated our sanctuary stained glass windows, which were created by Kevin Shay over three phases.

Graduate Recognition



On May 10, we recognized West Des Moines-Valley 2026 graduate Lucy Thomas. Lucy will be attending Iowa State University in the fall.

Dave Arens Recognition



On Sunday, June 7, we recognized Dave Arens and his 30+ years serving as confirmation small group leader comes to a close.

News and Events

Hymn Sing

2nd and 4th Sundays in July and August

Request to sing your favorite hymns from the ELW.

We will gather in the Sanctuary at 9:50 a.m.

NOTE: There will be no Hymn Sing on July 12.

SSLC Praise Band Favorites

July 5

Members of the Praise Band will be selecting their favorite praise tunes for our July 5 worship service.

St. Stephen Crafters

Meets Saturday, July 11

Room 103/105 at 10:00 a.m.

Property Day

Saturday, July 18, 8:00 a.m.

We need your help to maintain and beautify our church. We typically work for 2-3 hours as needed.

Please check the Friday email on July 17 for any special instructions. If Saturday morning doesn't work, contact Jerry Strawman for an alternative time.

Healing Prayers



July 19

Once each month, Sunday worship includes an opportunity for individual prayer for healing and anointing (the sign of the cross placed on your forehead in oil). If you wish to receive this ministry, simply proceed to one of the healing ministers once you've received communion.

Pop-Up Choir

Sunday, July 26

Join us for a summer pop-up performance from the SSLC Chancel Choir. Rehearse at 8:45 a.m. and sing during the Offering. All are welcome to join us!

Brown Bag Book Club

Each Wednesday at 11:30 a.m.

The book club gathers in the office Conference Room. We will not meet on Wednesday, July 1. Beginning July 8, we will be reading *Leaving Church* by Barbara Brown Taylor.



Supper Club

Friday, July 17, 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for Supper Club! Supper Club provides once per month informal socializing in someone's home. Open to any adult – with hosting not required. Just bring an appetizer to share and your beverage of choice. Please let our hosts, John and Jane Dieseth, (jdd156@hotmail.com), know that you will be attending.

Garden Help Needed

We can use your help watering and weeding the St. Stephen gardens, and the flowerpots. This is done on a weekly schedule Sunday through Saturday. One garden is located on the West side of the church under the large stained-glass window. The second garden is located on the south side of the building, starting at the South entrance. One pot is located at the South Entrance. The other pots are located at the West office entrance. Please water just the flowers in the gardens a few times a week. The bushes and grass do not need to be watered. The pots can be watered every other day. All are as needed.

Sign up here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20FOA4BA5AB2AA5FD0-64214717-water#/>

Please check in with Jane Dieseth when you start your week. She can answer any questions you might have. You may contact her at 515-321-9023.

News and Events

Summer Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Welcome Sherry Arntzen!

Sherry Arntzen is the new Office Manager joining in June 2026. Sherry is originally from southwest Iowa but has called Urbandale home since 1999. Sherry retired from public service with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in April 2026 after 32 ½ years of service. She and her husband Brent are members of St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Sherry will also be taking over communication responsibilities previously covered by Jane Cunningham.



Highlights from June SSLC Congregational Council Meeting

- Staffing updates and office schedules were reviewed.
- Presentation of St. Stephen Personnel policy. Discussion followed. Sample policy will be forwarded to Personnel Committee for final revisions, additions, and approval.
- Discussion of outside cameras was put on hold until we research FEMA grant possibilities.
- Very positive feedback was received on the new Welcome spaces.
- A video presentation was made on the new website design. The goal is to have the new website up and running by mid-July.
- Several council members volunteered to cover for Raul (our custodian) while he is on vacation.
- A very positive health update was given on Pastor Andrea.

Recognition for Tarra Sander -

Tarra Sander will remain on staff in a part-time accounting role. We will recognize Tarra for her time as Office Manager and also to celebrate her graduation from seminary during worship on Sunday, July 19.



News and Events

ELES Heads to Camp Amnicon for a Voyage of Faith and Adventure

This summer, our ELES (high school) youth will be heading north for an unforgettable week at Camp Amnicon in northern Wisconsin.

Together, with Camp Amnicon staff, they will embark on a Voyager canoe expedition through the beautiful Apostle Islands on Lake Superior.

This trip is much more than a camping adventure. Throughout the week, students will paddle together, prepare meals, set up camp, and learn to rely on one another as they experience God's amazing creation.

Living simply, and working as a team, creates opportunities for growth, friendship, and discovering

new strengths within themselves. Each day will include time for prayer, devotion, and reflection as we explore what it means to trust God, care for one another, and be good stewards of creation.

Surrounded by the beauty of Lake Superior and the Apostle Islands, we hope our youth will experience God's presence in powerful and meaningful ways.

As they journey together, we invite our congregation to keep them in your prayers. Pray for safe travels, favorable weather, strong friendships, open hearts, and moments that deepen their faith.

We are grateful for your continued support of our youth ministry and look forward to sharing stories and photos from this incredible adventure when they return.

Thank you for helping make experiences like this possible. Your encouragement and generosity allow our young people to grow in faith, build lasting relationships, and encounter God in new and exciting ways.



Update from Bill Freeman,

SSLC Council President

I wanted to give everyone a brief update on our pastoral status. Pastor Mark will be with us through the Sunday of August 2nd, after which he has been called away to attend to his wife and retirement. He has told us how much he's enjoyed and valued his time with us and may be able to assist again after some trips and time away if necessary.

In the weeks after, Pastor Rachel will be filling the immediate time to help us as we await Pastor Andrea's return. We hope to continue the last stretch until her return with help from the both of them,

along with some others added into the mix. This does mean however that we will not be asking for another Interim at this time.

As for Pastor Andrea, she continues to get stronger. As her recovery progresses, we will gauge our time frame accordingly. I am told her walks are up to as much as two miles now! However, for her to return to us, we must first ensure that she is fully ready physically, mentally, and spiritually. To that end, we shall wait and make due.

Outreach

Social Ministry Report for June, 2026

Committee Members: Jane Dieseth, Tracy Sabus, Sue Koch, Leslie Dahm

Urbandale Food Pantry Collection

For the month of May, we collected 28 Items totaling 45 pounds:

- 8 Pancake Mix
- 8 Syrup
- 6 Canned Protein
- 5 Canned Fruit
- 2 Misc. Baby Food/Formula

Urbandale Food Pantry Collection for July 2026

In July we will gather shampoo/conditioner, beans (canned or bags), peanut butter, and canned vegetables. Please place items for the Urbandale Food Pantry in the shopping carts (Gathering Area). Financial gifts marked "food pantry" are always welcome, and can be shared in worship or sent to the church office.

Free Little Pantry

Donate "dry goods" groceries by placing them in the Free Little Pantry itself. If there's not enough room in the Little Pantry, overflow can be placed in the designated tote inside the office entry door. Please be sure to close and latch the pantry door to keep weather and critters out.

Free Little Library

Donate books for all age groups by placing them in the designated tote inside the office entry door. Contact the church office for assistance with an after-hours donation. For assistance with the Free Little Pantry or Free Little Library, please contact our team: Sarah Tomjack, Krista Dial or Janet Davis.

July Pantry Needs

- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Canned Beans
- Bagged Beans
- Peanut Butter
- Canned Vegetables



Capital Campaign Update

We're pleased to report that both the roofing project and the elevator updates have been completed. The roofing project was the last phase of a water remediation effort, and the storage room has been converted to usable office space.

The elevator modernization project brought with it some updates, including a camera and display monitor in the elevator car. When the call button is pressed, the video feed is activated and the monitoring company has visibility into the car to see if anyone is in distress. In addition, the monitor can display messages and a number to allow the hearing impaired to text with the monitoring personnel.



We've also been able to replace the flooring in the office wing and the basement foyer, providing a much needed facelift, as well as work on the basement kitchen. The sinks have been removed and replaced with new counters and the cabinets are receiving a face lift. The improvements will allow the kitchen to serve as a more functional hospitality and storage space.

Your generous contributions allowed us to pay for the above projects without having to borrow any funds. The committee is now looking into the HVAC and prioritizing repairs and replacements to that system.





Arctic Adventure at Vacation Bible School!

What an incredible week we shared at Vacation Bible School! This year's theme, Arctic Animals: Caring for God's Creation, took children on an exciting journey through God's amazing world as they learned about polar bears, walruses, puffins, narwhals, and other Arctic animals. Along the way, they discovered that God loves all of creation and calls each of us to be good caretakers of the earth.

Each day was filled with Bible stories, music, games, crafts, snacks, and plenty of laughter. The children explored how even small acts of caring—recycling, conserving resources, showing kindness to animals, and appreciating the beauty of creation—are ways we can thank God for the wonderful world God has made.

This week would not have been possible without our amazing volunteers. From building an igloo, to feeding close to 70 people each night, to preparing materials, to leading stations, serving snacks, welcoming families, and cleaning up each day, so many people generously shared their time. Our youth helpers were wonderful role models, bringing energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement to our younger participants.

Thank you also to everyone who donated supplies, shared their gifts, prayed for our ministry, and supported Vacation Bible School in countless ways. Your generosity helped create a week where children experienced God's love, built new friendships, and grew in their faith.

As we pack away the Arctic decorations, we celebrate the memories made and the seeds of faith planted. We pray that the lessons learned during VBS will continue to inspire our children and families to love God, care for one another, and be faithful stewards of God's beautiful creation every day.

Thank you for helping make Vacation Bible School such a joyful and meaningful week!







Supporting Pastors Andrea and Ronald Myers

Below is the Most Recent Post on CaringBridge (June 27)

If you follow Andrea or me on Facebook you have seen that we are returning to some of our normal summer activities and are carefully getting back out into the world.

In large indoor crowds, Andrea is still choosing to use a mask, and so, we are trying to choose outdoor activities and finding ways to reduce contact with others.

Over this past month we have visited Rieman Gardens at Iowa State University. This public garden has a beautiful butterfly house, and is usually not busy during the week. We have also attended a few outdoor concerts, choosing to sit where we have a little distance around us. Today we attended the Des Moines Art Festival. It was kind of a big deal. First, we had a debate about the size of the crowd and if it was safe for Andrea to be there without vaccinations; the event is very popular and there can be a lot of people to navigate. However, by going during the day on Friday we reduced the number of people greatly, and we made sure that we left as soon as we noticed the crowd begin to grow.

But more importantly, last year's art festival was the moment that everything changed for us. Before we even left home to attend last year's festival, Andrea had said she was tired and we debated going at all, but we really enjoy this event, and she decided to "push through."

A few blocks into our walk she had gotten tired and

lightheaded, she needed to sit down. That was the moment I knew something was wrong. She had been complaining about being tired, but I could tell this was something more. My options for her at that moment were urgent care or emergency room. We left the festival and went directly to urgent care. They thought she might have been a little dehydrated, or overheated, but they took lots of blood tests. That's where the journey began.

The next day she had her first blood transfusion, and she was then hospitalized over the 4th of July.

By the middle of July, we had heard the word Leukemia and suddenly found ourselves at Mayo Clinic.

The month of August she was hospitalized full time for the first round of Chemo, and the rest of the summer was trips back and forth for treatments and rest.

In January she had her transplant and our four months in Rochester followed.

The transplant was the treatment for the Leukemia, and since returning home in May, she has been recovering not from Leukemia, but rather recovering from treatment.

If you see her today, she looks so different from when we came home May 1. She has hair now!!! But more importantly she has a lot more strength. She routinely walks 2 miles a day and is doing well. However, she is still regaining her mental resilience and acuity.



There are days she is tired and, in her words, she is “unproductive.” I remind her that recovering is hard work and those off days are rest days, she needs them.

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Since returning home, my role as caregiver has continued to diminish. I no-longer keep Andrea’s calendar, nor do I dispense her medications. I do still sometimes need to act as her external processor to help think through big things, but that too is becoming a less frequent occurrence.

Andrea is driving again and does not need someone with her at all times. Which means I am free to leave the house, and we both get time alone, which is important for any healthy relationship!

I have filled my days with gardening, quilting, and house projects, but those aren’t great time fillers when income is limited. I am ready to return to work, and I am in discussions with the synod office and a congregation about beginning a new interim. I hope that details for that will become clear soon, but the timing is in the Spirit’s hands not mine.

I am looking forward to returning to a pulpit and being part of a weekly faith community. It’s been a big year. I’ve learned a lot about myself, about Andrea, about family, church, and community.

I have been humbled by the love and generosity of our people. I have been surprised by some of the people who have “shown up” for us and by the unexpected people who have reached out even though I haven’t talked to them in years. Mostly, I am grateful to be reminded over and over again who Andrea and I are as a couple.

In our marriage we have faced some hard stuff, starting with ovarian cancer when we were just newly engaged, and the multiple surgeries over the years that have been a result of that. We have faced IVF and childlessness. We have endured

periods when one or the other of us was un-employed or under-employed. We have made friends with grief. We have had to say goodbye to beloved congregations and moved houses a couple of times. Through it, we have learned to depend on one another. We make decisions together. We trust one another and have learned that sometimes it’s best to just let the other person take the lead.

We know how to dream together, to have our “state of the union” talks when things are hard, to be honest about our relationship, and how to recognize when we are just tired or hungry. (Seriously, understanding when another person is hungry might be the greatest skill any person can master!)

We also have learned how to attend to our core, to pay attention to the things that our important to us; our faith, our family, our love of people and the world around us. I believe that those core values are held for us in beauty.

Our home is bursting with color and art, pictures of our family and friends fill our walls, we watch the birds in our yard with wonder, we find peace walking in our flower garden, our spirits are fed by theatre and live music, and worship, liturgy, and hymns bring God present in ways that defy explanation.

Beauty is so important to us. So, all that is why we needed to go to the art festival today. We needed to remember where this journey launched, but to not let Leukemia be the last word for the art festival. We need to remember all that this year has taken, and given, and to mark the healing that has happened.

We are resurrection people and in the midst of pain there is always new life! Andrea and I will always choose to live in the midst of beauty, to hear music, to dwell in art, to bask in nature; to have life, and to have it abundantly.

CaringBridge Updates

You can read updates from Pastor Andrea and Ronald at caringbridge.org after creating a free account. Pastor Andrea treasures every comment posted there! Andrea’s email address: revandreamyers@gmail.com

July Calendar



Wednesday, July 1

- No Brown Bag
- Grief Ministry Group
6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 2

- AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 4

- Independence Day
- Redeemed Fellowship
Rehearsals, 1:00 & 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 5

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

- Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m.
- Coffee and Donuts
Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship Center
Worship, 12:00 & 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 8

- Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.
- SSLC Band Rehearsal, 6:15 p.m.
- Grief Ministry Group, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 9

- AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 11

- St. Stephen Crafters, 10:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship
Rehearsals, 1:00 & 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 12

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

- Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m.
- Coffee and Donuts
Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship Center
Worship, 12:00 & 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, July 14

- Executive Committee
Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 15

- Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.
- SSLC Band Rehearsal, 6:15 p.m.
- Grief Ministry Group, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 16

- Care Companions, 4:00 p.m.
- AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, July 17

- Supper Club, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 18

- Property Committee, 8:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship
Rehearsals, 1:00 & 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 19

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

- Holy Communion (with
Healing Prayers), 10:00 a.m.
- Coffee and Donuts
Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship Center
Worship, 12:00 & 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22

- Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.
- SSLC Band Rehearsal, 6:15 p.m.
- Grief Ministry Group, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 23

- AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 25

- Redeemed Fellowship
Rehearsals, 1:00 & 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 26

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

- ELES Trip
- Pop-Up Choir Rehearsal, 8:45 a.m.
- Hymn Sing, 9:50 a.m.
- Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m.
- Coffee and Donuts
Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.
- Redeemed Fellowship Center
Worship, 12:00 & 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, July 28

- ELES Trip
- Council Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 29

- ELES Trip
- Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.
- SSLC Band Rehearsal, 6:15 p.m.
- Grief Ministry Group, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 30

- ELES Trip
- AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, July 31

- ELES Trip

July Celebrations

Birthdays

Erica Van Loon	07/1	Tammy Kirchner	07/15
Cheryl Decker	07/2	Kathy Bailey	07/17
Sallie Jones	07/2	Jim Walker	07/17
Brent Monson	07/2	Jane Burger	07/18
Calli Cairo	07/3	Renae Peters	07/18
Zane Cairo	07/3	Mckenna Walker	07/21
Ardith Jenison	07/3	Jim Guthrie	07/22
Marylin Burns	07/4	Cindy Schaffer	07/23
Jim Eastvold	07/4	Ron Hintz	07/24
Karen Rumelhart	07/5	Steve Ruth	07/24
Les Walck	07/5	Greg Dahm	07/25
Greg Arens	07/6	Janet Davis	07/26
Paige Caskey	07/7	David Gilchrist	07/26
Arlys Ketterling	07/7	Lizzy Grove	07/27
Terry Lantz	07/8	Douglas Phillips	07/28
Evelyn Rawson	07/10	Roger Drown	07/29
Donna Cole	07/11	Rick Jorgenson	07/29
Bernadette Carnes	07/13	Matthew Kuker	07/29
Norma Hagge	07/15	Charmian Folkerts	07/30

Anniversaries

Larry & Karen Huntley	07/2
Marybeth & Steven Lytle	07/3
Barb & Carl Pettigrew	07/7
Dave & Marsha Arens	07/10
Tanner & Jana Taylor	07/18
Keith & Cathy Jaben	07/21

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
3510 72nd St.
Urbandale, IA 50322



Save *the* Date!

Outdoor Fall Kick-Off Service
Sunday, September 13 at 10:00 a.m.!