



News & Notes

3510 72nd Street • Urbandale, IA 50322 • 515-276-4628 • office@ststephenlutheran.org



Lent 2024: Reflections on Giving

During Lent, the St. Stephen members of all ages are invited to focus intentionally on the spiritual discipline of giving. We'll ask: *Why do we give? What do we give? What power do our gifts have in the world?* Each week, Wednesday services will explore a different form of giving and the impact our gifts have on the world around us. Join us for worship and learning on Wednesdays through March 20!

Dates and events:

Wednesday Evenings, February 21 through March 20: Explore our "Reflections on Giving" theme.

- 5:15 p.m.: Community Meal
- 6:00 p.m.: Holden Evening Prayer
- 6:45-7:30 p.m.: Intergenerational "Table Talk" will invite further reflection through discussion & coloring.

Maundy Thursday Worship



Thursday, March 28
7:00 p.m., with a community meal beginning at 6:15 p.m.

Good Friday
Worship

Friday, March 29
7:00 p.m., with a community meal beginning at 6:15 p.m.

Easter
Sunday Worship

March 31
10:00 a.m.
Invite your friends!



Easter
EGG HUNT

SATURDAY, MARCH 30
11:00 AM

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
3510 72nd St, Urbandale, IA 50322
(515) 276-4628
www.ststephenlutheran.org



Easter
Breakfast

Sunday, March 31
8:30-9:30 a.m.



News & Events

Angie Zenk's Retirement Open House

Many thanks to all who attended or sent cards for Angie Zenk's Retirement Open House! Angie was presented with a gift from the congregation: an Iowa State-themed stained glass yard ornament (created by Kevin Shay). We're grateful to Angie for always being a caring presence in the church office!



Celebrating Angie Zenk: By the Numbers

One of Angie's many duties was to collect "By the Numbers" congregational statistics. To honor her retirement, we offer some numbers representing her accomplishments during 16+ years at St. Stephen Lutheran. (See yellow chart below.)



News & Events (continued)

Welcome Brian Cople, Our New Director of Worship & Music

February 22, 2024

Dear St. Stephen community:

I'm delighted to announce that Mr. Brian Cople will join the St. Stephen staff as Director of Worship & Music on March 18, 2024!

Brian received the unanimous recommendation of the Search Committee following our nationwide search. He "checked all of the boxes" as a seasoned ministry professional with experience in traditional and contemporary worship styles, choral music, and teaching youth. The committee believes his good humor, creativity, and thoughtful wisdom will be wonderful assets to St. Stephen's ministry and our staff team.

Here is a brief introduction:

A native of Nebraska, Brian is a born and bred midwesterner, growing up on Clearview Farm with its shorthorn cattle and fields of corn, wheat and milo. As an impassioned church musician, he has over 35 years' experience serving in churches of many denominations as Music Director, Organist, Choral and Instrumental Conductor, Liturgist and Cantor.

Brian graduated from University of Nebraska Omaha with a Bachelor of Music Degree (Organ), and completed Graduate Studies in Choral Conducting at UCLA. He has been happily married to Javier for the last 24 years, and together, they share their love for animals, music and traveling. They have resided in Australia for the last 23 years.

In accepting the position, Brian wrote, "I feel blessed to be given this opportunity. I am excited about serving at St. Stephen and gladly accept your offer inviting me to be part of this journey to see what God has in store for us."

As this time of transition comes to a close, I'm deeply grateful to Caroline Kinney for her excellent service as Interim Organist and Choir Director since November 2023. Caroline will continue with us through Easter Sunday (March 31). This brief overlap with Brian will allow us to carry on with the Holy Week and Easter plans already in place, and to provide some breathing room for Brian as he gets up to speed.

In closing, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the Search Committee, whose steadfast effort and discernment brought this nationwide (international!) search process to a successful conclusion. Members of the team were: Kris Shay (chair), Dave Arens, Noreen Christians, David Critchlow, Peg Gilchrist, Sharon Jorgenson, Dick Koepplin, Tracy Sabus, and Donna Schroeder.

Thank you also to you, St. Stephen community, for your patience and faithful prayers during this extended transition!

With joy and thanksgiving,



News & Events (continued)

Staffing Assessment Task Force Update

As you may know, St. Stephen is taking a pro-active look at the staff resources needed to support the current *and future* mission of the congregation. A task force was formed to interview staff and selected members, review job descriptions, and consider “best practices” for church staffing today. Their goal has been to understand the strengths of our existing church staff/volunteer structures, identify needs, and consider where resources are most needed today. The members of the task force have been: Peg Gilchrist (Council Liaison), Pastor Andrea Myers, Cathy Edmondson, Don Herman, and Carol Koeplin.

In February, the task force compiled its learnings and recommendations and presented them to the Congregation Council. Drawing from the completed interviews, the task force summarized current congregational strengths and opportunities to build upon them. The report also described some barriers that – if removed – could improve engagement, increase energy, and/or nurture spiritual growth at St. Stephen. Finally, the task force made several recommendations around how our staffing structure might be adjusted to best use the gifts of our staff and accomplish our mission.

The next step in the Staffing Assessment will be for the Council to discern which of these recommendations will be adopted. Following this, they will provide instruction to the Personnel Committee to guide future recruitment and hiring.

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Church Office News

While our office staff transition continues, a number of volunteers have stepped up to serve.

Our “Office Guild” supports general office operations, from answering phones to completing various research and organizational projects. Office Guild volunteers are: Audrey Jones, Peg Gilchrist, and Leslie Dahm. Thank you for welcoming these new faces and voices to the office!

Please note that Church Office hours have changed! **The office is open Tuesday (9 am - 2 pm), Wednesday (9 am - 2 pm), and Thursday (9:30 am - 2:30 pm).** Staff are available at other times by appointment. You can continue to reach the church office by email at office@ststephenlutheran.org.

We also now have a “Bookkeeping Guild” of three members: Alma Grove, Becky Zieman, and Donna Schroeder. All of them are former St. Stephen treasurers and bring great problem-solving skills and know-how to the task.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this season of change!

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Council Update

During its first meeting, our 2024 Congregation Council held elections for our St. Stephen officers. We’re grateful to all our Council members for their willingness to serve, and we pray for them as they lead the St. Stephen community in its common life and mutual mission. 2024 Council Members are:

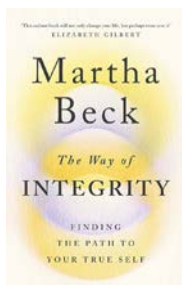
- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Jane Burger | Alma Grove (President) |
| Greg Dahm (Treasurer) | Eric Gude |
| Jane Dieseth | Audrey Jones (Vice President) |
| Bill Freeman | Elizabeth Koeplin |
| Peg Gilchrist (Secretary) | |

News & Events (continued)

Brown Bag Book Club

Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m.

The book club gathers each Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. in the office Conference Room. We have begun our next book, *The Way of Integrity* by Martha Beck.



Backpack Packing

After Worship on **Sunday, March 3**, St. Stephen continues our partnership with Olmsted Elementary School for the 2023-2024 school year, providing food to help 100 children get through the weekend without going hungry. This ministry is made possible by your regular offerings as well as designated gifts. Please join us for our packing event after worship. If you'd like to get more involved with this ministry, please contact our project coordinator, Carol Mahlendorf: 515-991-3586.



Supper Club

Friday, Mar. 15 at 6:30 p.m.

We hope you'll consider joining your church family for this fun event on the third Friday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the host's home. All you need to do is RSVP to Marilyn and Bill Gift (marilyn.gift@gmail.com) our hosts for Mar. 15. Let them know if you're coming and ask questions if you have them. Just bring a dish to share and your beverage of choice.



Property Day, Saturday, March 16

We need your help to maintain and beautify our church. We typically work for 2-3 hours as needed. Please check the Friday email for any special instructions. If Saturday morning doesn't work, contact Jerry Strawman, (515) 402-3357, for alternative time.



Emerge Student Field Trip February 11

St. Stephen's EmERGE students and leaders recently visited the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George. They received an introduction to Orthodoxy and attended worship.

Easter Breakfast (see front cover)

Save the Date: Easter Breakfast on **Sunday, March 31**. Enjoy a delicious meal and support our youth as they prepare for the 2024 trip to Sky Ranch (Colorado) and the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

Update Your Online Directory Info!

Our Online Directory is a great tool! You can access it at www.stephenlutheran.org, or download the "Online Member Directory" app to your smart device and enter our mobile code: STSTEPHENLUTHERAN.

We're actively working to update the information in the online directory — and you can help! Each member can update their own photo and contact information. If you don't have your login information, email Audrey Jones at audreyjones516@gmail.com for the link and password to access your information.

With the Online Directory, you can see members' photos and contact info. It's good to connect faces and names. Before you know it, you will be greeting pew mates by name when you share the peace!

News & Events (continued)

Scout Sunday Thank You!

During worship on February 4, we observed Scout Sunday and recognized the contribution Scouts and Scouters make as they live out their daily vocation of service. Ethan Walk shared a wonderful reflection on being a Scout who is reverent and does duty to God and country. If you missed it, the recording is available online. Thank you to Pastor Chris Lang, Visitation Pastor and chaplain of Scout Troop 96, for organizing this special event.



Synod Assembly Opportunity

St. Stephen is part of the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA. Each year, pastors, deacons, and lay people representing the congregations of the synod gather for the Synod Assembly. Would you consider representing St. Stephen as one of our voting members of the 2024 Synod Assembly, which will be held Friday, May 17 and Saturday, May 18 in Coralville, Iowa. We're able to send two voting members (in addition to Pastor Andrea); all confirmed members of the congregation are eligible. St. Stephen will provide registration, housing, and mileage reimbursement.



2024 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly
May 17 & 18
Coralville, IA

The Synod Assembly is an opportunity to learn more about the ministries that St. Stephen is part of, through the ELCA. The agenda will include matters such as elections, adopting the synod budget, and receiving reports. While the fine points of parliamentary procedure are not everyone's cup of tea, voting members often return inspired and encouraged by all that the Holy Spirit is accomplishing through St. Stephen and congregations like us. Just ask Alma Grove and Larry Ewing, who attended the 2023 assembly!



You can learn more at the synod website by scanning this QR code. Please speak to Pastor Andrea or a Council member if you're interested.

Reflections on Giving

St. Stephen people are generous! This community shows a generosity of spirit, welcome, and care, as well as amazing financial generosity. Such generosity is the visible mark of a people who are “full of faith and the Holy Spirit” as our namesake St. Stephen was (Acts 6:5).

A generous community is made up of generous individuals, so I'd like to ask: Why are YOU generous? Who were the people – family, friends, mentors – who taught you to give, and to give joyfully?

I learned a lot about giving from my family. My parents volunteered countless hours at swim meets as officials and chaperones. Each week, I watched Mom write our offering check for church, which Dad put in an envelope from the box in his sock drawer. My eldest brother Eric's love language is giving gifts, and he takes great delight in granting little wishes in a big way. My big sister Kathryn was a champion for the weak who defended her younger siblings against neighborhood bullies. My brother Karl taught me how to drive a stick-shift car, giving patient and gracious instruction as I ground away at the clutch.

More lessons about generosity came through our congregation's collection of “Quarters for World Hunger” during Lent. My family and many others marked the days until Easter by sliding one quarter into each slot on the offering card we brought to church on Easter morning.



Through these and other experiences, I learned several important lessons. Giving is a joyful thing! Giving our time and attention is just as important as being generous with our money. Giving to others is a proper and faithful response to God's gift of daily bread.

What do you give, and where? WHY do you give? Where did you learn these things, and how are you passing these lessons and values on to others? These are some of the questions we will explore together during Wednesdays in Lent (details on the cover).

St. Stephen is gathering gifts for ELCA World Hunger during Lent through our “40 Days of Giving” offering. While cards for coins are a thing of the past, we have provided a calendar with daily quotes and reflections to mark each day with a giving prompt. Printed calendars can be picked up at church, or you can **download with this QR Code**.



We're also offering the “40 Days of Giving” Study Guide for use at home. The guide offers a weekly reflection and questions to answer on your own, or discuss with a friend or family member. Again, printed copies can be picked up at church, or you can **download it with this QR code**.

You are a generous people, and through your giving you share the love of God every day, right where you are. Thank you!

Pastor Andrea

Outreach

A “Free Little” Update

Thank you to all who have contributed to, prayed for, supported, and shared the message about St. Stephen’s little pantry and library! Since 2019, our Free Little Library (located at the intersection of Maryland Dr and 72nd Street) has made reading more accessible to our community. In 2023, we added a Free Little Pantry to extend our ongoing mission to give our neighbors “something to eat.”

To say that these ministries have been a wild success would be an understatement! Books are flying off the shelves, and we simply cannot keep the pantry stocked! We are so thankful to all of you, the St. Stephen community, for supporting these ministries and our community.

Have you wondered how to contribute to the pantry during colder months, when foods might freeze in the pantry? See the list (right).

As the “free little” ministries grow, our little team needs help! Can you volunteer some time? Tasks include managing/ sorting donated books, filling the library and pantry, and helping to create a bookmark with additional community resources. For more information, please contact Krista Dial at krista.brittain@gmail.com.

Many thanks, again, to everyone who has contributed to the pantry and the library, and thank you in advance for your ongoing support!



Little Pantry Foods to Donate During Winter

- Sugar
- Flour
- Cake mix
- Frosting
- Powdered milk
- Loaf of bread
- Olive oil (freezes at 10 degrees)
- Drink mixes (especially those that can be made with water)
- Coffee & Tea bags
- Can openers (especially if donating canned goods)
- Gloves/mittens
- Stocking caps
- Herbs & spices
- Feminine hygiene products
- Dishwashing detergent
- Canned goods (when low temps are above 28)



Outreach (continued)

God's Work. Our Hands

Our project during Lent is "40 Days of Giving" to support ELCA World Hunger. A weekly devotional and daily calendar support study, reflection, and share stories from people around the world who benefit from the ministry of ELCA World Hunger. Consider setting a goal for the whole season of Lent, or donating a certain amount each day. We'll gather our offerings on Easter Sunday!



Food Pantry Collection for March and April

In **March and April** we will be collecting cereal, pasta and peanut butter. Monetary donations are always welcome throughout the year. You can place your donation in the offering plate, bring it to the office, or mail it to St. Stephen.



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, and Janet Davis.



Lent Discussions ...



March 2024 Celebrations & Calendar

Anniversaries

March 3: Fred & Susan Koch (51)

March 18: Carl & Renae Peters (52)

Birthdays

March 3: Marsha Arens

March 4: Dave Fellman

March 7: Diane Graves, Austin Nelson

March 8: Kayla Story

March 9: Jordyn Austin, Mary Gliem

March 10: Bre Ehredt, Julie Lorenz

March 12: Dave Fachman, Sonja Hunt

March 13: Kade Yager

March 14: Barb Rinell

March 15: Beth Goebel

March 16: Marlys Ruth

March 19: Jeanette Courter, Larry Ewing, Samuel Pattison, Crew Yager

March 20: Tami Caskey, Chase Freeman, Will Haas

March 21: Bill Gift

March 22: Barb Van Orsdall

March 23: Sandy Goering

March 26: David Critchlow

March 29: Sherry Arntzen, Megan Ferguson

March 30: Amelia Devries, Ethan Walck

March 31: Shane Bruse, Leo Ryan, Anna Zinselmeier



**Happy
BIRTHDAY**

March Calendar

Saturday, Mar. 2

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, Mar. 3, Third Sunday in Lent

Breakfast Club, 9:00 a.m.

Spark Sunday School, 9:00 a.m.

Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m. (also live streamed on Facebook and YouTube)

Coffee and Donuts Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.

Backpack Buddies, 11:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Mar. 6

Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.

Supper at the Table, 5:15 p.m.

Lent Worship, 6:00 p.m.

Lent Discussion, 6:45 p.m.

Thursday, Mar. 7

AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Chapel Chimers, 6:30 p.m.

Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Mar. 9

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, Mar. 10, Fourth Sunday in Lent, Daylight Saving Time Begins

Spark Sunday School, 9:00 a.m.

March Calendar (continued)

Breakfast Club, 9:00 a.m.

Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m. (also live streamed on Facebook and YouTube)

Coffee and Donuts Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Mar. 13

Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.

Supper at the Table, 5:15 p.m.

Lent Worship, 6:00 p.m.

Lent Discussion, 6:45 p.m.

Thursday, Mar. 14

AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Chapel Chimers Rehearsal, 6:30 p.m.

Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, Mar. 15

Supper Club, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Mar. 16

Property Committee, 8:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, Mar. 17, Fifth Sunday in Lent

Spark Sunday School, 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast Club, 9:00 a.m.

Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m. (also live streamed on Facebook and YouTube)

Coffee and Donuts Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Mar. 20

Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.

Supper at the Table, 5:15 p.m.

Lent Worship, 6:00 p.m.

Lent Discussion, 6:45 p.m.

Thursday, Mar. 21

Care Companions, 5:00 p.m.

Life of Faith Team, 6:30 p.m.

AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Chapel Chimers, 6:30 p.m.

Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Mar. 23

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, Mar. 24, Palm Sunday

Spark Sunday School, 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast Club, 9:00 a.m.

Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m. (also live streamed on Facebook and YouTube)

Coffee and Donuts Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 12:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Mar. 26

Council Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Mar. 27

Brown Bag, 11:30 a.m.

NO Supper at the Table, 5:15 p.m.

NO Lent Worship, 6:00 p.m.

March 2024 Celebrations & Calendar

March Calendar *(continued)*

Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:45 p.m.
Thursday, Mar. 28, Maundy Thursday
Maundy Thursday Meal, 6:15 p.m.
AA Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
Maundy Thursday Worship, 7:00 p.m.
Friday, Mar. 29, Good Friday
Good Friday Meal, 6:15 p.m.
Good Friday Worship, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, Mar. 30
Easter Egg Hunt, 11:00 a.m.

Redeemed Fellowship Center, 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, Mar. 31, Easter Sunday
Easter Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.
Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m. (also live streamed on Facebook and YouTube)
Coffee and Donuts Fellowship, 11:00 a.m.
Redeemed Fellowship Center, 12:00 p.m.



St. Stephen Lutheran Church
3510 72nd St.
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

