



The first Sunday of March is Transfiguration Sunday, a.k.a. Alleluia Sunday. The gospel reading for the day describes how the disciples caught a glimpse of the “transfiguration” or metamorphosis of Jesus. In other words, they saw Jesus momentarily as he really is — shining with divine light and glory.

We celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord with “Alleluias.” Songs of praise and joy, for in the metamorphosis of Jesus we catch a glimpse of the end result of our own journeys of faith. Yet at the end of the service we hide the alleluias in a wooden chest that will sit in front of the altar until Easter. For

six weeks we will not use the word “alleluia” in our worship.

The hidden Alleluias signal that we are entering the season of Lent, a time of serious self-reflection. The hidden Alleluias also point to the image of God within each of us. Lent is a time to focus on the spiritual disciplines that are most helpful in nourishing and nurturing our true-child-of-God-selves. We are called to fast, give and pray. Over the next six weeks we will explore what these practices involve and how we might engage in them more deeply in our own lives.

Fast! While many people think of fasting as giving up a meal or a particular food (e.g. chocolate) for Lent, it might be more spiritually meaningful to fast from screen time or another habit that might be getting in the way of your relationship with God or others. It might be more meaningful to explore what it means to fast from selfishness or holding grudges.

Give! It is traditional during Lent to encourage church members to give, above and beyond their pledge or regular giving. How much? Try \$1 a day for 40 days, or maybe \$10 a day. The Council will be designating this Lenten offering for a special ministry which will be announced on Sunday, March 10.

Pray! Martha Grace Reese writes, “Good prayer habits act like an incubator for our relationship with God. If we pray, if we show up, God has a much better chance of getting through to us. Over time, we know ourselves better ... Prayer changes things within us and for other” (*Unbinding the Gospel*, pp. 149-150).

Join us as we fast, give and pray our way through Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday (March 6) and coming to fulfillment with in the worship services of Holy Week (April 18-20) and Easter (April 21).

Sundays

8:00 & 10:30am Worship

9:15am Learning Hour (Adult Series on the Holy Land Then & Now)

Wednesdays beginning Ash Wednesday, March 6

5:45pm Simple Soup Supper

6:30pm Worship (featuring Holden Evening Prayer with Holy Communion)

7:15pm Confirmation, Music Rehearsals (Operation Backpack dates to be announced)

Blessings,

Pastor Ritva

What is God up to?

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton addresses the many challenges churches are facing in her recent article in *Living Lutheran*. Eaton proposes the question, "What is God up to?" in relation to the decreasing numbers of active members in the 21-century church. The ELCA has a decrease of 70,000 member per year or about 1 synod per year. What do we do with this information?



In general, multiple denominations are experiencing the same kind of decrease in active members, especially of those who are in their 20s and 30s. The decrease in membership brings much anxiety to congregations across the United States in regards to finances, building maintenance, and lack of new membership. These anxieties send us into survival mode, but Eaton shares encouraging words.

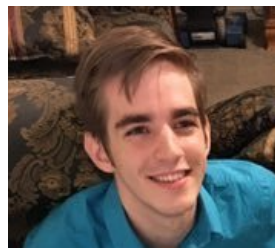
Eaton suggests we are asking the wrong question. Our first instinct is, "what can we do?" Eaton challenges us to ask the question, "What is God up to?" Eaton reflects that the ELCA is living in a time of transition in the Western church so at this point, we are not sure what the future holds.

The good news in all of this is that we may not have a clear vision, but God does. This opens two more questions Eaton asks, "How is the Spirit reshaping the church?" "How will Christ use us as Christ's living body in the world?"

As a congregation, if we desire to invite people to the table at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Eaton suggests attention and devotion in worship, prayer, Scripture study, generosity and service. How are we reaching out to those who desire a faith community? To our neighbors who are hungry? God has chosen us as the hands and voices to welcome the stranger to be a part of our community.

(edited from Living Lutheran, February 2019)

Introducing David Zorn



As St. Stephen's new Communications Coordinator, David Zorn hopes to help make communication and collaboration more accessible in the church. Having just moved to Iowa for the first time, he is looking for a community and congregation to help welcome him to this cold place. David graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2018 and specializes in video, photography, and website design. David is happy to be in Iowa and always looking to meet new people in the church, just say hello!

David will be responsible for our Google calendar, weekly eNews, sign-up geniuses, monthly Messenger, our website, Facebook page, Facebook group, and our databases. If you have information to share with the congregation you can reach David at sslcommcoord@gmail.com. His office hours are 10:30 - 2:30 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

Winter Cancellation Policy

- Sunday morning worship will only be canceled if Pastor cannot physically get to the church due to freezing rain or blizzard conditions. Snow and cold temperatures normally will not keep her home. Members are urged to use their judgment about whether it is safe to travel to church.
- Wednesday evening programs (worship, confirmation, music rehearsals) will be cancelled if and when the Cedar Rapids School District cancels classes.
- Cancellation notices will be appear on Facebook, our website, and KCRG.

Stewardship Update

As of January 31, 2019 here is what our finances looked like:

	January	Year-to-Date	% of 2019 Budget
Total donations & income collected	\$32,660	\$32,660	14%
Total expenses	<u>\$21,074</u>	<u>\$21,074</u>	9%
Net Income	\$11,586	\$11,586	

Checking Account Balance: \$22,474 Mission Investment Fund Balance: \$17,191

The Stewardship Team offers a very special word of appreciation to the three families who gave their entire 2019 gift in the month of January. These gifts have given us a strong start to the year. *Thank you!* Now it's up to the rest of us to do our part.

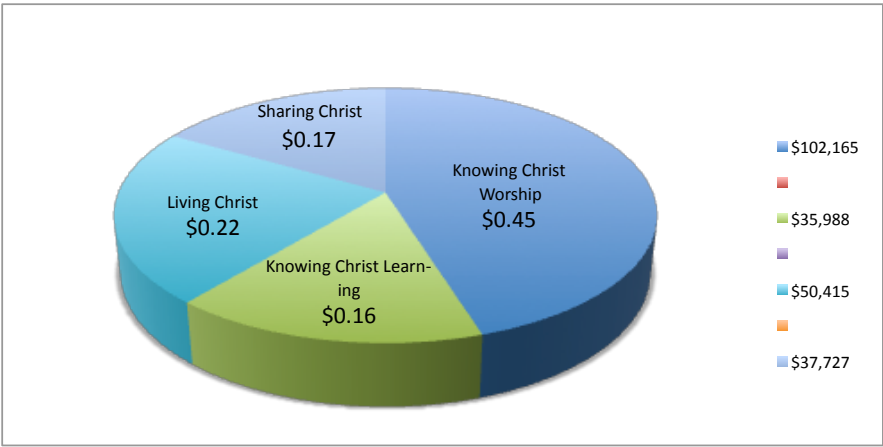
Thank you to everyone who helped make our second annual Scandihoovian Dinner fundraiser on January 26 a success by donating ingredients and supplies, cooking and baking, braving the cold and bringing their friends to enjoy a warm and wonderful gnome-cooked meal. The net proceeds were \$2,137.

Thank you to all of you for your commitment of your time, your talents, and your financial gifts to St. Stephen's. The pie chart below shows how each dollar you contribute to the general fund supports our mission and ministries.

If the cold and snow are keeping you at home, you can mail in your gift, give online on our website, or contact Jenny Weber (jenny.a.weber@gmail.com or 319-892-0570) to set up an electronic funds transfer. Not sure how your gift supports St. Stephen's? The pie chart below shows how each dollar you contribute to the general fund supports our mission and ministries.

Gratefully yours,
The Stewardship Team

Lee Paulsen (Chair), Donna Gladish (Council Liaison), Emily Robins, Ross Blanchard, Robin Kenney (Treasurer), Pastor Ritva (ex-officio), DeeAnn Hebrink (ex-officio)



WORDS FROM THE ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE:

Times and Seasons

March 10th we set our clocks one hour FORWARD and begin daylight savings time. Later this month we mark the official beginning of spring on the calendar. We move forward this month.

We can use this month to move forward with our endowment funds; we did not, unfortunately, move the endowment forward very much during 2018. But this is a new year and this month is a new season, heralding new and renewed life, increased daylight, and more outdoor activities. It's a season, perhaps, to make a large or small contribution to the endowment.

And maybe it's a season to arrange for a legacy gift to the endowment; that definitely involves looking forward!

Spring might or might not be "in the air," but the time and the seasons move forward. So do we move forward, way forward, by continuing to build our endowment.

Lyle A Kleman, Chairperson
Ashley Hart
Nichole Plagge
Pr Ritva Williams, *ex officio*
DeeAnn Hebrink, *ex officio*



Adult Learning Topics:



Meets every Sunday morning at 9:15am
in the Fellowship Hall

March 3- Pancake Breakfast for Haiti

March 10- The Holy Land Then & Now:
Bethlehem

March 17- The Holy Land Then & Now:
The Galilee

March 24-The Holy Land Then & Now:
Jerusalem

Women Wine — & Wisdom —

Mardi Bras!

Tuesday, March 5

6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall

Dinner will be catered in at a cost of
\$10/person. We will have a guest speaker
and feel free to bring your own beer or
wine

RSVP Amy at amykuhn2@aol.com or
270-6365. Childcare and rides can be arranged.



Practice Discipleship in Daily Life

Join us as we explore the seven faith practices that are the foundation for following Jesus in daily life: Worship, Prayer, Encourage, Study, Give, Invite, Serve.

WORSHIP

Sunday Worship Schedule, 8:00 and 10:30am.

Wednesday Worship is at **6:30pm**. Join us each week for a casual and participatory service.

- 1st Wednesday... Taize-Style Worship
- 2nd Wednesday... Interactive Worship
- 3rd Wednesday... Healing Service
- 4th Wednesday... Interactive Worship
- 5th Wednesday... Interactive Worship

Choir rehearsals, Wednesdays at 7:15pm. Join us as we prepare the cantata, "The Highest Place" for presentation at the Easter Vigil, Saturday, April 20, at 7pm.

STUDY

Sunday Morning Children's Time at 9:15am in the Children's Place (Pre-K/K) and in Classroom 8 (1st-5th grades) in the lower level). We use *Spark Lectionary Curriculum*.

Life Long Learning 9:15am: Adults are invited to join in discussion each Sunday morning in the Fellowship Hall. For a list of this month's speakers & subjects, go to page 4.

Men's Coffee & Study Group (Mondays at 8am) at Mr. Beans in Marion. Current topic is end of life issues. We are currently sharing stories of our life and faith.

Women's Bible Study (Tuesday at 10am) in the Fellowship Hall. We are studying Acts of the Apostles.

Wednesday Evening Confirmation Program for Middle School Youth (6th-8th grades) in Room 9. Contact Pastor Ritva for more information.

INVITE

Women 50+ Luncheon — March 12 at 11:30am.

For information, RSVP Ardell Begalske at reb4724@imonmail.com or 319-393-7073.

WomenWineWisdom Mardi Bras on Tuesday, March 5 in the Fellowship Hall. We will be collecting feminine hygiene products for Waypoint's women's shelter. Food will be catered in at \$10/person. RSVP Amy at amykuhn2@aol.com or 270-6365. Childcare and rides can be arranged.

SERVE

Quilting Ministry: Contact Barbara Kusler – 319-826-3794 (home).

Hospitality Hosts - Sundays at 9:00am in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Each Sunday you have the opportunity to provide refreshments for guests and members. For more information or to sign up go to www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0c4aa9aa2ba3f94-hospitality, contact Amy Kuhn at amykuhn2@aol.com or 270-6365.

Operation Backpack

We will resume packing sacks twice a month **Wednesday, March 6**. Volunteer opportunities include:

1. Someone to pick up the food every other Tuesday at HACAP
2. Someone to deliver food to Grant Wood every Thursday
3. Set up the assembly line for packing every other week when we pack. Assembly line will need to be ready before we are ready to pack on Wednesday night. Setting up the assembly line before worship or Tuesday.

To know, live and share Christ



GIVE

Opportunities to Sign Up for...

Altar Flowers – Sponsoring flowers for the altar is a nice way to honor a loved one's birthday, anniversary, or other special date. Sign up is easy! Go through Signup Genius or check the sign up on the What Would Jesus Sign Up For bulletin board.

The cost is \$25. You can place a check in the offering with "flowers" on the memo line, pay at the kiosk in the narthex, or pay online through the website. Take your flowers home after the second service or leave them to be shared with a member who cannot attend services.

Coffee Sponsorships — help provide Fair Trade Coffee for Sunday morning fellowship time. Cost is \$10. You can place a check in the offering with "coffee" on the memo line, pay at the kiosk in the narthex, or pay online through the website.

Sanctuary Lamp Oil - Keep the sanctuary lamp lit. The cost is \$10. You can place a check in the offering with "lamp oil" on the memo line, pay at the kiosk in the narthex, or pay online through the website.

Current Special Giving Opportunities...

Amazon Smile - Do you shop on Amazon? Donate to our church with each of your purchases. Instead of using the regular Amazon site to make your purchases, go to <https://www.smile.amazon.com>. Choose St Stephen's as your charity.

Quarters for ELCA World Hunger - All quarters in the offering plate go to fight hunger throughout the world.

HACAP, Operation Backpack - Help the children fill the the quarter tube by the pulpit, so kids at Grant Woods & Erskine Elementary Schools can eat!

LORD

Hear Our Prayers



Members

Mick Butz
Mary Flecksing
Harriet Hemphill
Marty Johnson
Ann Kleman
Josie Lahart
Toni Lee
Kayla Marner
Judy Nye
Joan Petersen
Marilee Reinertson-Torres
Dorothy Schourek
Steve Thomas

Relatives

Trent Rosberg
Gertrude Lee
Peter Olney

For the Family & Friends of those who have died

David Goepfert
(Jan 16)
Florence Meyer
(Jan 28)

Serving in the military and/or overseas

Alex Grafft, Army National Guard
Jacob Aune, Marines
Jayson Clinton, Army

Our Global Mission Partners

The Rev. Elineema Mndeme and people of Kisiwani, Pare Diocese, Tanzania (our Companion Congregation) and Bp. Charles Rabson Mjema and staff, Pare Diocese, Tanzania.

The children and staff at the Ebenezer Glenn Orphanage in Haiti.

Please contact the office or use a Prayer Request card (in your pew rack) to place your loved one's name on this list for two weeks and/or request prayer of the pastoral staff. If your loved one desires a pastoral visit, please contact Pastor Ritva by voice or text at 319-693-2087 or by email at pastorritva@gmail.com.

The Core Values of St Stephen's Lutheran Church

Whole Hearted Hospitality

Life-changing Sacred Practices

Grateful Service

Joyful Witness



March is National Professional Social Work Month

March is National Professional Social Work Month, a time to recognize social workers and thank them for all they do. At Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), we're grateful for the many social workers who have dedicated their lives to serving our community!

Maybe you've never had a social worker involved in your life. Yet, whether you realize it or not, you've had the benefit of their behind-the-scenes work in your community. Social workers help people help themselves in overcoming life's most difficult circumstances or managing challenges of everyday living: poverty, abuse, mental illness, depression, addiction, disability, and many other situations.

Iowa wouldn't be the same without the patience, guidance, and empowerment that social workers provide. Happy National Professional Social Work Month!

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at www.LSIowa.org and www.facebook.com/LSI.iowa.

Finding a Support System

Aubreigh knew something needed to change.

She was struggling with substance use and alcohol. She couldn't find a way to take care of her mental health. She was unable to provide a safe home for her son, who needed to move in with his dad. When she finally took a step in the right direction and found a home, all her belongings were stolen.

Through LSI's Family Safety, Risk, and Permanency Services, Aubreigh connected with her worker, Kelsy. Together, the duo is working on budgeting Aubreigh's money, finding a good job, and building a safe home environment for her son.

"I was in a bad situation, and I'm really thankful for LSI," she says. "Without them, who knows where I'd be."

Aubreigh now meets with Kelsy once a week and feels like she is finally on the right path after plenty of hard work. She is working with her son and his father to build a healthy co-parenting relationship, and she knows Kelsy will always be in her corner, ready to cheer her on.

"Kelsy has been an awesome resource. She helps if we have issues co-parenting, and we do a lot better now as a family," Aubreigh says. "If I have any problems, Kelsy is there."



February snows!



Sliding at Pastor's
house (Feb 16)



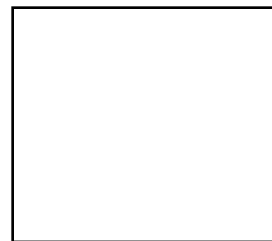
Men's Bowling Night (Feb 18)



*From Left to Right: Tom Harrington, John Williams, Dan Husmann,
Doug Johnson, Aaron Tank*

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, ELCA
610 31st St. SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403-3021

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Staff Directory

Pastor
Office Administrator
Music Director
Piano Accompanist
Premises Keeper
Council President
Communications Coordinator

Rev. Dr. Ritva Williams
Sherry Mercil
David Haas
Leslie Hyland
Debbie Polk
DeeAnn Hebrink
David Zorn

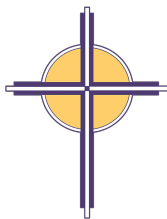
pastorritva@gmail.com
office@ssluth.com
music@ssluth.com
lesliehyland@gmail.com
(319) 329-7655
dhebrink@yahoo.com
sslcommcoord@gmail.com

Sunday Morning Schedule

8:00am First Worship Service
9:00am Coffee & Fellowship
9:15am Learning Hour
10:30am Second Worship Service

Wednesday Evening Schedule

6:30pm Worship



**St. Stephen's
Lutheran Church, ELCA**
To Know, Live, and Share Christ.
ssluth.com • 319-364-2637

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a **Reconciling in Christ** congregation that welcomes diversity, which enriches, nurtures, and challenges our life and ministry.

***Come and join us as
we know, live, and
share Christ
together in love.***

