



Welcome to all:
happy or sad, rejoicing or grieving, seeking or believing.
Welcome to all, here is good news:
To you is born this day, in the city of David,
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
His name is Jesus, which means "Liberator," "Rescuer," "Deliverer."
His life changed the world.
His living presence changes us today.
Lift up your hearts. Rejoice! Give thanks to God!"
(Brian Wren, "Welcome to All: A Call to Worship" in *Advent, Christmas and Epiphany - Liturgies and Prayers for Public Worship*, 2008, p. 104).



As I write, we are in the final stages of preparing to celebrate Christmastide, the holy season that begins on Christmas morning and ends at Epiphany on January 6.

On Christmas Eve morning we will hear again the words spoken by the angel Gabriel to Mary, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28). My prayer is that you will hear these words this time as if spoken directly to you, and that these words will continue to ring in your ears and settle deep in your hearts throughout the twelve days of Christmas. As you ponder what the New Year will bring, remind yourself:

I am favored by God. Indeed, God wants to do great things through me.

One of those things might be _____

Perhaps this could be the basis of a New Year's resolution to let Christ's living presence change you and inspire you to make a positive difference in your home, your workplace, your school, your community.

As Christmas gives way to Epiphany, as 2017 gives way to 2018, know that you are a favored and beloved child of God, through whom God yearns to make a positive impact in our world.

Christmas-New Year's- Epiphany Blessings to you all!

Pastor Rítva

P.S. Please join us here at St. Stephen's for the following Christmastide worship opportunities:

Sunday, December 31, 9:00am (Anna & Simeon bless the Christ-child, Luke 2:22-40)

Wednesday, January 3, 6:30pm (Taize worship)

Sunday, January 7, 8 & 10:30 (Epiphany/Three Kings Celebration)



The calendar turns a page and it is a new month and a new year. Although in youth ministry, we have been on a new year for three months already. Either way, I felt this would be a good time to recap what the youth and young adults have

been up to in the last calendar year.

All Youth

- A trip to SkyZone
- Church cleaning day
- Served Easter breakfast
- Bever Park service project
- A day at Vander Sanden's cabin on Holiday Lake
- Selling, making, and delivering apple pies
- Operation Turkey Sandwich

High School Youth

- Continued meeting to discuss faith questions most Sunday mornings
- Began meeting in a youth's home once a month
- Began having dinner with Mark at a restaurant once a month
- Went on the ROOTED Trip

Middle School Youth

- Attended the Synod's ConFest for confirmation students
- Five youth affirmed the baptismal vows
- Attended the UNI Middle School Lock-in

Young Adults

- Continued the weekly email devotions
- A trip to SkyZone
- A trip to Cedar Ridge Winery
- Held a potluck

So you can see that it has been a busy 2017 for the youth and young adults!

Blessings,

Mark Howland

Youth & Young Adult Minister



Epiphany: noun (adapted from dictionary.com)

1. a Christian festival commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi

2. an appearance or manifestation, especially of a deity.

3. a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something, usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience.

This is what a basic Google search will give you when you ask for a definition of Epiphany. Most of what's given is information that we already know, its common knowledge that most of us have probably grown up with. But let's look at this just a little deeper.

Take a closer look at the third meaning given for Epiphany. If we look at this meaning in the light of our faith, we look at it with eyes still attuned to Christmas and the incarnation of Christ. We see that this simple, commonplace event turns into something great and meaningful for us. A baby being born, something that happens everyday, changed the world and our lives forever. What a wonder to think of how simple events can change the world!

So my friends, let's think about how we can continue to practice this throughout the season of Epiphany. How can we continue to see simple, everyday events in the light of something great? I invite you, over the next month, to do just this. Look out for small things in your life that remind you of the light of Christ. What are some things that seem simple but really do bring joy and hope to your world and to our neighbors' world. And be sure to share with me, I'd love to hear your stories!

God's peace,

Vicar Mikayla Kopp



Communication Notes:

- Communication links:
 - Website - ssluth.com
 - Facebook page - ssluth
 - Facebook group - St Stephen's Lutheran Church
 - Twitter - ssluthcr
 - Instagram - sslccr
 - Tumblr - ssluthcr
 - Google+ - St Stephen's Lutheran Church
- Remember to check in on Facebook and Google when you are at the church.
- We now have one SignUp Genius account for the church. If you have something which you need volunteers or food for, please contact Mark Howland (sslcommcoord@gmail.com or 319-364-2367).
- The church calendar is being kept up to date through the office. If you have an event, a group meeting, or plan to use the facilities, please be sure to contact Mark so it can be added to the calendar. This calendar is available on the website or by looking at the bulletin board in the fellowship hall.
- The bulletin boards throughout our building will begin to be reorganized so be sure to check out the changes as they happen.
- Watch for a redesign of our church's website in the coming months.

**If you have information to share, need assistance or have questions answered, be sure to contact Mark Howland, our Communications Coordinator.

Mission Partner Update - Tekeste Gebrekidan:

Terri & Ev Petersen report:



"We heard from Tekeste! He was so excited and happy! He made it to the refugee camp on Saturday after two days of travel from Addis Ababa. He is staying in the very northern part of Ethiopia near a town called Shire. He did say the name of the camp, but we couldn't catch it. We started looking online and there are three large camps near there in the Tigray region and sounds like they are heavily filled with Eritreans, so our guess is that he is at one of those camps. He is so happy and he said the people loved everything he brought over - from diabetes kits to basketballs. We asked if he is okay financially (personally) and he said he is doing just fine, so that was a relief. We know he will NOT spend a cent on himself so lots of prayers for his health and well-being!"

Updates will continue as they are received.

RIC SUNDAY

St Stephen's Lutheran Church has been an RIC (Reconciling In Christ) congregation since 2014. On Sunday, January 28 Reconciling In Christ congregations nationwide celebrate RIC Sunday. This is an opportunity for congregations to reflect upon what it means to welcome diversity and advocate for individuals who have been marginalized in the church. It also provides an opportunity to learn more about how to welcome and encourage these individuals in our midst.

Here is a resource link if you would like to learn more:

www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/ricsunday

There is information and recorded sermons on this site.

JANUARY ADULT LEARNING TOPICS

Sunday, Jan 7 - *Epiphany Festival & Bake Sale*

Sunday, Jan 14 - *Ev & Terri Petersen: The Refugee Camps of Ethiopia*

Sunday, Jan 21 - *Bishop Michael Burke: The State of the Synod*

Sunday, Jan 28 - ***Annual Congregational Meeting***



Scandihoovian Dinner....

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church cordially invites you to join us for a Scandihoovian Dinner on **Saturday, January 27**. There will be two seatings, one at **5:30pm** and one at **7:00pm**.

Menu includes:

- Swedish meatballs
- Mashed potatoes and gravy
- Egg noodles
- Pickled herring
- Cucumber salad
- Red cabbage slaw
- Rye bread
- Spritz cookies
- Ginger molasses cookies

Tickets:

\$10 for adults and youth

\$5 for children aged 8 and under

Silent Auction:

There will be a not-so-silent dessert auction that will include lefse, Swedish cream, and other homemade Scandinavian goodies.

Prizes:

We will also sell tickets to raffle items, including a batch of home-brewed beer, a quilt, garden gnomes, and other desirable prizes.

Welcome Bishop Michael Burk



On Sunday, January, 21, we have the opportunity to welcome the Bishop of the Southeast Iowa Synod, Michael Burk, to our worship and learning hour. Bishop Burk will be sharing the message at both the 8:00am and the 10:30 am services. During the learning hour between the services, Bishop Burk will be sharing about events in our synod and answering your questions.

So please make sure to attend worship and the learning hour on Sunday, January 21. Bring your questions with you so that you may be better informed regarding the affairs of the Southeast Iowa Synod.



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 according to the following schedule:

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

Would you like to sing with us? Join us Wednesday nights following worship at 7:15-8:15pm. **Childcare is provided during rehearsals.**

STUDY

Sunday Morning Children's Time at 9:15am will resume Sunday, January 14 in the Children's Place (Pre-K/K) and in Classroom 8 (1st-5th grades) in the lower level). We use *Spark Lectionary Curriculum*.

Music with David Haas: The second Sunday of each month, after opening devotions in the Children's Place (lower level), the children come up to the sanctuary to learn a song they will offer as part of the worship during the second service.

Sunday morning High School Youth Discussion: (Youth Room) - see website for topics.

Life Long Learning 9:15am (Fellowship Hall) see page 4 for January topics.

Bring Your Bible to Brunch the 1st & 3rd Sundays each month, at Lion Bridge, 59 16th Ave. Join Pastor Ritva and John as they explore the lectionary readings for the following Sunday.

Men's Coffee & Study Group (Mondays at 8am) at Mr. Beans in Marion.

Women's Bible Study is taking a winter break through the month of January and will resume on Tuesday, February 6 at 10:00am.

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

INVITE

WomenWineWisdom – Thursday, January 11. Location to be determined. RSVP Amy at amykuhn2@aol.com or 270-6365. Childcare and rides can be arranged.

Scandahoovian Dinner — Saturday, January 27, 4 - 8pm — "A Gnome Cooked Meal" - Scandinavian meal with all the delicacies and all the decorations. Invite friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors.

Women 50+ Luncheon — Tuesday, February 13 For information, RSVP Ardell Begalske at reb4724@imonmail.com or 319-393-7073.

SERVE

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

Operation Backpack - Every other Wednesday at 7:15pm in the Narthex. (January 3, 17, and 30)

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, contact Amy Kuhn at amykuhn2@aol.com or 270-6365 or Nicole Brooks at nab21871@aol.com or 270-0900, Hospitality Team.

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 Sponsor - Help provide coffee for fellowship between services and other church events. The 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.

Epiphany Festival & Fundraiser

On Sunday, January 7, we will celebrate Epiphany with a festival and a special fundraiser. Our festival will include games for all ages and special treats such as "King's Cake."

Epiphany is when the church remembers the wise people bringing gifts to the Savior. So we invite you to also bring gifts. We will hold a special fundraiser to support the HACAP backpack program in which we participate. There will be a bake sale and donations will be accepted.

HACAP purchases food for the backpacks in bulk at wholesale cost. However, it still costs \$5 per week or \$200 per school year for each student. So let's give to feed hungry children.

LORD

Hear Our
Prayers



Members

Steve Thomas
Mick Butz
Pete Hansen
Joan Petersen
Toni Lee
Judy Nye
Harriet Hemphill
Elfriede Hansen
Ann Kleman
Cris Nodruft
Gail Husmann
Delbert Ditch
Dan Stark
Rollin Begalske

John Rosentreter
Jenni Beck
Ella Bartules
LaRue Hagen

Friends

Pat Schnitzel
Glenna Houtz
Michelle Stafford
Jerime Mitchell
Martha Handley
Rachel Hollingshead

Relatives

Trent Rosberg
Dave Goepfert
Mary Rose
Barnotes
Gertrude Lee

Serving in the military and/or overseas

Alex Grafft, Army National Guard
Jayson Clinton, Army, Turkey

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.

Thank
You

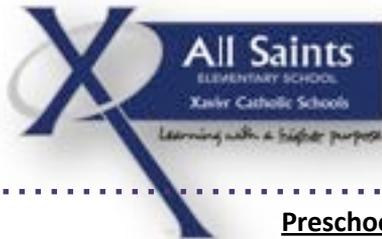
to everyone who made a special Thanksgiving offering to our LOAF ministry. The balance in the fund as of November 30 was \$1285. This sets us up nicely for the new year.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

The Finance Committee met on Thursday, December 7 to project a preliminary budget for 2018. The good news is that we have received 9 new first time pledges, 28 households increased their pledges, and 50+ households look to maintain their current giving levels for 2018. **Thank you for your commitment to the mission and ministries of St. Stephen's!**

The sad news is that three members of our congregation died this year, a family is moving, and a few others have had significant changes in employment, health or life circumstances. The result is that a number of households had to decrease their financial commitments or are no longer giving. Consequently income projections for 2018 are about the same as for 2017. What that means is that we will be able to maintain all our existing ministries, and even give all our staff a 1.5% raise, but ...

It looks like we will not be able to continue the internship program beyond the summer of 2018, increase our mission support to the Southeastern Iowa Synod/ELCA, or hire a designer for our much needed kitchen and bathroom renovations. These decisions will not be finalized until our annual meeting in January. So ... there is still time to make a financial commitment or a special offering to help us meet these goals.



Preschool 101: "A Parent's Guide to All Saints Preschool"

Please join us for an opportunity to check out All Saints Preschool and register for the 2018-2019 school year on **Tuesday, January 30, 2018 at 6:30 PM** in the school cafeteria. All Saints School is located at 720 29th St. SE. The evening will be filled with program and curriculum information, tours of the Preschool classrooms, a chance to meet and greet the Preschool staff, and an opportunity to register for the 2018-2019 school year! In addition, we will share information about wrap around Child Care for families in need of Child Care. Children are welcome to attend. Supervised activities will be provided in the Child Care Center during the informational session.

If you cannot attend the meeting and would like to visit Preschool or Child Care, please call All Saints School at 319.298.9844 or contact Preschool director, Sheri Miller, at smiller@allsaints-crschool.org.

Parent Meeting for Kindergarten 2018-2019

Tuesday, January 30, 2018 – 6:30 p.m.

As parents, providing your child with an outstanding education, in an environment that fosters the development of their Catholic faith and deepens their love of God, is the most important gift you can give. All Saints Catholic School can provide this experience, with rewards that will last your student's lifetime.

If you are interested in learning more about All Saints Catholic School, please join us on Tuesday, January 30th @ 6:30 p.m. to learn more about our program. We would appreciate the opportunity to visit with you and answer any questions you may have about the educational plan for your child.



Raising our Voice for Iowa Children and Families – Lutheran Day on the Hill

Families living in poverty. Iowa children in need of a forever family. Former refugees building new lives.

These kinds of issues are rarely the center of attention at the Iowa State Capitol. Let's change that!

Please consider joining Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) and the three Iowa synods of the ELCA for Lutheran Day on the Hill, an annual day of advocacy in Des Moines to uplift the needs of our neighbors. The event will be held on Thursday, February 8. Visit www.LSIowa.org/advocacy next month for event details, online registration, and an online toolkit for your congregation.

If you are new to advocacy, come learn more about the legislative process and your role as a citizen. If you've attended before, join us again. We hope this year's schedule will also allow you more opportunities to connect with legislators. If you would like more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI's director of philanthropy and church relations, at 563-676-2065 or Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org.

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.

Friendly Competition

When the time came to take their U.S. Citizenship Exam, Bhakti and Chhali felt overwhelmed.

Originally from Bhutan, the couple moved to Des Moines from a refugee camp in Nepal. Since then, they have been busy improving their English and settling into their new home. They both worked seven days a week and struggled to find time to study for their exam.

LSI's Refugee Community Services were there to help. LSI provides English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and Bhakti and Chhali studied hard in class to prepare for the writing and reading component of their exam. They supported and competed with each other, pushing themselves to succeed.

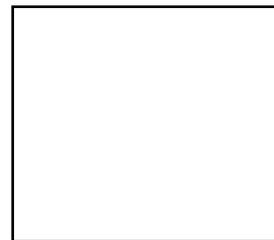
Their work paid off, and Bhakti and Chhali recently passed their exam and are now U.S. Citizens.

"We appreciate the help our LSI volunteers gave us on the Citizenship Exam," Bhakti says. "They are so committed to seeing us meet our goals."

Thank you for empowering your Iowa neighbors. We couldn't do this important work without you!

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

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Staff Directory

Pastor
Youth & Young Adult Minister
Pastoral Intern
Office Manager
Music Director
Piano Accompanist
Premises Keeper
Council President
Communication Coordinator

Rev. Dr. Ritva Williams
Mark Howland
Mikayla Kopp
Sherry Mercil
David Haas
Leslie Hyland
Debbie Polk
Jeanne Towell
Mark Howland

pastorritva@gmail.com
mhowland1983@gmail.com
kopp.mikayla@gmail.com
office@ssluth.com
music@ssluth.com
lesliehyland@gmail.com
(319) 329-7655
thetowells@msn.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.***

