



is the shortest month of the year with only 28 days (29 in leap years). The third month of winter, it is named after an ancient Roman purification ritual *Februa* that occurred at the time of the full moon about the 15th of the month. The highlight of the month is the celebration of love and romance on Valentine's Day.

It is ironic that the day given over to hearts and flowers, sweet greetings and chocolates is named after two early Christian martyrs. Both were named Valentinus, lived near each other in central Italy in the same decades, and shared the same fate of imprisonment, torture, and execution about the year 278 for refusing to renounce their faith in Christ.



Bishop Valentinus (image to the left) was a healer of the sick and blind.

Presbyter Valentinus (image to the right) allegedly got in trouble with the Roman authorities by ignoring an imperial edict that barred men from marrying until they had completed their military service. In defiance the presbyter continued to bless the unions of Christian couples who were not legally allowed to get married. Over the centuries legends about St. Valentine combined elements from the lives of both men, e.g. he allegedly healed and befriended his jailer's daughter,



to whom he penned a note signed "*Your Valentine*" just before his execution. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, St. Valentine's Day became associated with the tradition of courtly love and romance, and from there evolved into the celebration of lovers that is familiar to us.

In various Christian traditions, St. Valentine's Day is not just about romantic love but celebrates the God who is love and abides with us in love (1 John 4:8-17). God's gift of love poured into human hearts finds fulfillment as it is shared between couples, within families of all kinds, within faith communities, and within neighborhoods (1 Corinthians 13; Colossians 3:12-17). Christ even commanded us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). Indeed Christ commanded us to love all people just as Christ does (John 13:34-35; 15:12-17).

Let this February be a month for opening our hearts and reaching out to one another, and especially sharing God's love with those who are vulnerable and in need.

The last day of February 2017 is Mardi Gras. ***Once again the women of St. Stephen's will be having a "Mardi Bras" dessert and coffee gathering, Tuesday, February 28, at 7pm. Our guest speaker for this event will be Alida Selim from the Islamic Center of Cedar Rapids who will share with us some of the history of women within Islam and the experience of Muslim women in America today.*** As we have done in the past, we will be gathering feminine hygiene products (and/or money to purchase the same) which will be donated to Waypoint. Homeless and working poor women and girls often do not have the means to purchase these items, which in turn negatively impacts their ability to work and go to school.

*Pastor Ritva*

# Endowment Sunday, February 19

## *Planting for the Future*

Join us for breakfast at 9:15 and learn how **you** can ensure that St. Stephen's continues doing good for our church family and our neighborhood for many years to come, even after you are gone, by investing in our endowment fund.

Yes, we have one! Come and see!



## Camping Sunday, February 26

Summer is almost here! That means it is time for all of us to think about camping, and what better place is there to go than Ewalu Bible Camp. So that everyone can get in the mood and think warmer thoughts, we are going to focus on all that Ewalu has to offer on February 26. During Education Hour we will hear from former campers and have a discussion on the impact that church camp can make on a life and our spiritual journey. At each of the worship services a special event will take place during the children's time.

So come and celebrate the gift of Ewalu Bible Camp, hear stories, and get in the mood for summer!

A couple of reminders:

- St. Stephen's offers camp scholarships to all youth and Ewalu Bible Camp offers camperships. See Mark for more details if you are not here on February 26.
- Deadline for the early bird discount of \$40 is February 28; deadline for the early registration discount of \$20 is April 17.



I wanted to share with you this month some important information regarding the safety of our children and youth. Last fall, the youth ministry team spent time reviewing our child safety policy and researching similar policies from other sources. After a couple of months working on revisions, the team presented a revised child safety policy to the Council. In October the Council approved the revised policy with an effective date of January 1, 2017.

One of the first things that needed to be done in the implementation of the policy was to gather the Child Safety Committee as directed by the revised policy. The membership of this committee was to include the Youth and Young Adult Minister, a member of Council, a member of the Youth Ministry Team, and an at-large member from the congregation. So in addition to me, Emma Israel, Kara Buckaloo, and Barb Coates comprise this committee. In January the committee met to discuss details of the revised policy and the implementation plan of it.

A significant aspect of this policy is that all volunteers that are in leadership roles with youth and children ministries must submit an application, participate in training, and undergo a background check. Emma shared some details regarding this, and I will be following up with our current volunteers.

The goal of the policy is to ensure that our youth and children are always in the safest environment possible. A second goal of the policy is to provide some empowerment for the many volunteers who share their gifts with our youth and children. There is a copy of the policy on our church website under the youth and young adult tab. You may also request a printed copy of the policy from me. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

*Mark Howland*, Youth & Young Adult Minister



One of my main responsibilities on internship has been to plan and design a curriculum called *Lenten Labyrinth*. You will encounter this theme in regular worship, Wednesday evening contemplative worship, adult learning hour, and through an online experience for those who want a more in-depth study of Scripture and spiritual practices.

What is a labyrinth and why is it chosen as our theme for Lent this year? A labyrinth has been a meaningful *symbol of journey and spiritual renewal* for both ancient and modern cultures for centuries. Labyrinths should not be confused with mazes that are often meant to confuse. Though there are twists and turns on a labyrinth and one may feel like they are wandering, you are never lost on a labyrinth; for there is only one path. Labyrinth is a beautiful and evocative metaphor for the journey of faith. We often do not know where we are going but we are guided and can only see the steps in front of us. It is easy to feel like a lost, wandering soul in this world that is often fragmented, noisy, and filled with confusing messages. A labyrinth is *a way home*. God draws us toward our spiritual center and sends us out to live our faith in the world. The center of the labyrinth reorients us in *our one, true identity in Christ*. When we are sent out on the journey away from the center, the path does not change, but our perspective and point of view does. The labyrinth is a tangible reminder of the Holy Spirit's deep, hidden transformation, which takes place in the *daily renewal of baptism*. I invite you to sign up to learn more and explore this experiential, spiritual journey this Lenten season.

**You can find more information and sign up for the Lenten Labyrinth Online Experience by clicking on our website's homepage labyrinth slide or by calling the church office. The registration deadline is Monday February 6, 2017.**

*Vicar Kristi Grieder*



# 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 morning services at 8:00 and 10:30am**

**Wednesday worship at 6:30pm:**

- 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. Following rehearsal, there is a craft beer exchange!** We are a fun group. Come join us. All are welcome!

## STUDY

**Children's Time: Sundays at 9:15am in Children's Place** (downstairs). Second Sunday of the month: *Children's Time & Music with David.*

**Confirmation for Middle School Youth: Wednesdays at 7:15pm, Room 9**

**High School Discussion Group: Sundays at 9:15am in the Youth Room.** Bring a friend!

- Feb 5 – *Being Silent* Feb 12 – *Current News*
- Feb 26 – *Bible Trivia*

**Adult Learning: Sundays 9:15am, Fellowship Hall**

- Feb 5 – *Family Promise Update* (Steven Stefani)
- Feb 12 – *Forgiveness* (Kate Fish)
- Feb 19 & 26 – *TBA*

**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 Study Group (Mondays at 8am) at Mr. Beans** in Marion.

**Women's Bible Study, Tuesdays, resuming February 7, at 10am,** will study Women of the Reformation. **Stay after on February 14 for the Women 50+ Luncheon at 11:30am!**

**Lenten Labyrinth Online Experience –**

**February 22-April 19:** Join our online community for an in-depth study of Scripture and exploration of spiritual practices this Lenten season. See *Vicar Kristi's article on page 3 for details.*

## INVITE

**Men's Fellowship Group – Monday, February 6, 6pm at Westdale Bowling Center** (2020 Scotty Dr. SW).

**Youth Activities:**

Wednesday, February 8, 7pm

***High School Youth Gathering at the Hebrink's***

Sunday, February 12, 11:30am

***High School Lunch/Study/Discussion Time in the Fellowship Hall***

Wednesday, February 22, 7pm

***High School Youth Gathering at The Quarter Barrel***

Friday, February 24, 7pm

***Rough Riders Game (HS & MS Youth)***

**WomenWineWisdom – Thursday, February 9, 6pm at Ramsey's Wine Bistro** (1120 7th Ave, Marion). RSVP Amy at [amykuhn2@aol.com](mailto:amykuhn2@aol.com) or 270-6365.

**Mardi Bras Fundraiser – Tuesday, February 28, 7pm – See page 1 for more details.**

## SERVE

**Operation Backpack, Wednesday, February 15, 7:15pm.**

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

## GIVE

**The Endowment Committee will hold an “Endowment Sunday” on February 19.**

Between services there will be an **Endowment Brunch** and **guest speaker**.

*Lyle A. Kleman*, Endowment Committee Chair



*Thank you!*

Dear people of St. Stephen’s,  
Thank you for the generous and thoughtful gifts this Christmas. Thank you for thinking of us and all of the warm wishes. Jonathan and I are grateful to be in this community this year, and we look forward to the remaining six months!

Sincerely,  
*Vicar Kristi and Jonathan Grieder*

My St. Stephen’s friends,  
Thank you so much for your lovely cards and gifts at Christmas. They meant so much to me. I am truly blessed to be a part of your amazing community!

*Susan Hallock*, Office Manager

# LORD

Hear Our  
Prayers



### Members

Steve Thomas  
Mick Butz  
Lee Tramutolo  
Pete Hansen  
Ken Kaiser  
Joan Petersen  
Toni Lee  
Judy Nye  
Harriet Hemphill  
Suzanne Schmidt  
Vicky Johnson

Shirley Coates  
Dave Goepfert  
Cathy Goepfert  
David Hagen  
Berdella Pitz  
Doris Henderson  
Mary Rose  
Barnotes

### Friends

Pat Schnitzel  
Glenna Houtz  
Michelle Stafford  
Jerime Mitchell  
Alice Adams  
Phyllis Stark

### Relatives

Terry Swalve  
Trent Rosberg

### We pray for the family and friends of:

Patty Travers, Leslie Hyland’s aunt, Vicki’s sister-in-law, who died on January 23.

Ellen Dennis, who died Thursday, January 12.

### Serving in the military and/or overseas

Nick Wheeler, Army National Guard (grandson of Gail & Dan Husmann)

Alex Grafft, Army National Guard

*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 Monday Prayer Team. If your loved one desires a pastoral visit, please contact Pastor Ritva.*

### We welcome our newest members:

Nate Whipple (through the sacrament of Holy Baptism), Anna Kenyon, and Carol Miller White. All affirmed their faith on Sunday, January 29.

## Happy Valentine's Day from LSI!

*"We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19*

Lutheran Services in Iowa's (LSI) mission is about love: responding to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. We give thanks for all the ministry partners of both individuals and congregations who help share this love for Iowa children, families, and adults!

We see this love in newly adopted children and their families, in teens who learn to trade self-harm for self-worth, in refugee farmers who share their love of the land with the Des Moines community, in struggling parents who learn positive ways to build love and trust with their children and in so many other moments of hope every day. Thank you for the love you share and create through LSI.

*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](http://www.LSIowa.org) and [www.facebook.com/LSI.iowa](https://www.facebook.com/LSI.iowa).*

---

### **Building Brighter Futures**

Learning new things can always be difficult. Especially when you're learning to be a first-time parent.

Sarah's first son, Mark, was a happy baby. But as he grew into his toddler years, Sarah was unsure how to handle his behavioral changes. When he started acting out at home, she felt herself growing more frustrated.

Sarah knew she needed help. That's when she turned to LSI's Parents as Teachers program. Parents as Teachers provides free and voluntary parent education and support for families in Boone and Story County, with children up to age 5.

The program was with Sarah every step of the way, providing home visits, introducing her to community support groups, and teaching her how to adjust to Mark's developmental stages. *"With help from Parents as Teachers, I learned his behavior was just a phase, and they told me it was normal," Sarah says. "Before, I thought there was a problem with me, I wasn't a good parent."*

Mark, now 3, entered preschool last fall, and Sarah is proud to see how much progress he has made. He's meeting new friends and at home he's become the best big brother to his baby sister, Hannah.

Learning how to handle Mark's developmental stages has made Sarah more confident in raising Hannah. She knows what to expect as Hannah grows up, and she's ready to face each day and create the brightest future for her children. *"Parents as Teachers helped me so much with my parenting," Sarah says. "The program is the best thing I have."*

*Celebrating Epiphany – Wednesday, January 4*



*Youth Outing at Sky Zone – Saturday, January 14*



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

**ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED**

Non-Profit Org.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Permit No. 140

## Staff Directory

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

Rev. Dr. Ritva Williams  
Mark Howland  
Kristi Grieder  
Susan Hallock  
David Haas  
Leslie Hyland  
Debbie Polk  
Jeanne Towell  
Marilyn Loan

pastorritva@gmail.com  
mhowland1983@gmail.com  
kvh.grieder@gmail.com  
office@ssluth.com  
music@ssluth.com  
lesliehyland@gmail.com  
(319) 329-7655  
thetowells@msn.com  
marilyn.loan@me.com

## Sunday Morning Schedule

8:00am First Worship Service  
9:00am Coffee & Fellowship  
9:15am Education Hour  
*Through August 20:*  
10:00am Second Worship Service  
*Beginning August 27:*  
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.***

