



# The Quill

## THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

December 2023



### KEEP AWAKE

Keep awake! You will hear these words a great deal during this season of Advent, especially as we enter Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary, the Mark year. This phrase from the Gospel of Mark is a powerful theme for this Advent time of expectation and joy. It is liable to make its way into my preaching, teaching, and writing this month, so get ready for an Advent mantra!

Keep awake for Christ's coming. We spend this time of the year in anticipation of Christmas, our celebration of God's great gift to the world, the Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. We keep awake for the birth of a lowly child in a small, unimportant little village a few miles from Jerusalem. We keep awake for the glorious Hosannas sung by choirs of angels to shepherds (of all people). We keep awake for the in-breaking of God into our broken human reality.

Keep awake for Christ's coming. We spend this time of the year looking for Christ's presence among us even here and now. We look for Christ in his "distressing disguises" as Mother Theresa said. We look for Christ coming to us in the poor, the sick, the hungry, the naked, and the imprisoned. We look for Christ in the meek and lowly so that we might serve and worship Him there.

Keep awake for Christ's coming. We spend this time of the year looking forward to the completion of creation. We look forward to the time when Christ will come again and bring with Him the completion of all things. We look forward to the time when all shall be made new, and we shall stand in the presence of God and live and love in God's kingdom here on earth.

Keep awake! Keep awake! Keep awake! This alert and expectant posture can be difficult at times. And ironically, it can be even more difficult during the season of Advent. We find many things that would keep our attention and focus elsewhere, keep us asleep to the coming of Christ. And it is perhaps easiest to get sidetracked by our preparations.

This time of the year is one of fellowship with friends and family, but often in the bustle of cooking and cleaning we can miss Christ's coming to us in that fellowship, so treasure the time you have with your loved ones and don't worry too much if the food is "just right" or if the house is "clean enough." Feel the love of God in your guests and love them back with that same love.

Another dangerous distraction is that of gifts. We can quickly lose sight of the gift of Christ amidst our concern for finding "just the right thing" or finding the best "bargain." We have been granted the most amazing gift of all, the gift of God-with-us, Jesus Christ, who died in order that we might have life and life eternal. We have the gift of God's love and forgiveness and we are called to share that gift with one another first and foremost.

Keep awake! Christ is come, Christ is coming! What joyous news this is! Please don't forget the reason for this season. Please do your best to keep awake to Christ in our midst and Christ coming! Keep awake with anticipation for we have glad tidings, we have great joy, we have the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

In Christ,  
**Pastor Jon**

## CONGREGATION COUNCIL



Our November meeting was held on November 14, 2023

In attendance: Pastor Nelson, Pastor Sheppard-Witt, Sandy Croushore, Julie Meeks, Jeffery Berry, Susan Kauffman, Pam Buckley, Paul Reier, J.R. Lyons, Brandon Cave, Nancy Egloff, Corey Knestrick, Alison Carney

- There was continued discussion on our HVAC system replacement and initial cost estimate. Additional estimates are being requested with more discussions to come.
- As part of our St. Stephen and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church shared ministry, we will hold a joint Council meeting on February 18. The shared ministry committee is exploring ideas for shared service and fellowship activities.
- Jane deSolms reviewed with Council the proposed 2024 budget for the St. Stephen operating account. Council expressed appreciation for the work of the finance team and discussed the budget at length. Council votes on the budget in December; additional data that becomes available during the meantime can help inform the decision-making process.
- Participation in the 2024 Synod Assembly will be online.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for December 12.

**Alison Carney, Secretary, Congregation Council**



## CHRISTMAS AND ADVENT SERVICES

**December 3, 8:30 and 11:00 am**

First Sunday of Advent

**December 6, 7:00 pm**

Wednesdays in Advent - *Praise*

**December 10, 8:30 and 11:00 am**

Second Sunday of Advent

**December 13, 7:00 pm**

Wednesdays in Advent - *Trust*

**December 17, 8:30 and 11:00 am**

Third Sunday of Advent

Children's Christmas Program at 11:00 am Service

**December 20, 7:00 pm**

Wednesdays in Advent - *Lament*

**December 21, 7:00 pm**

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church - Longest Night Service

**December 24, 9:45 am**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**December 24, 7:30 pm**

Worship featuring sermon, choirs and Holy Communion. Come at 7:00 pm for preservice music from our singing choirs and the St. Stephen ringers.

**December 24, 10:00 pm**

Contemplative Worship Service with Holy Communion, and soloist Emily Rosenberger singing *O Holy Night* and *Gesu Bambino*.

**December 25, 10:30 am**

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church - Christmas Day Service

**December 31, 9:45 am**

Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion

## CAMPUS MINISTRY



Happy Advent, beloved siblings in Christ!

It is hard to believe but the semester is already wrapping up for our LSA students. Elections for our 2024 officers will be held after the students return from Thanksgiving break. In the meantime, we give great thanks to our current officers, who will be ending their term at the conclusion of this semester: Katie O. (LSA president), Nathaniel I. (LSA Vice-President), Mia R. (Treasurer), and Ellie O. (Historian).

Please keep our students in your prayers as they head into the last leg of their semester and into their exams. We pray for safety for our students as they travel over break.

Our Pumpkin Carving event raised \$170.17 for Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services. By a large margin, our winner this year was Autumn Leaves! Thank you all for your support of LSA and for LIRS.

- 1st: Autumn Leaves Fall like Pieces into Place - \$81.51
- 2nd: Cat - \$25.10
- 3rd: Tradition - \$18.10
- 4th: Luther Rose - \$14.86
- 5th: LSA - \$11.76
- 6th: Pampered Pumpkin - \$10.81
- 7th: Bird - \$8.03 [My poor bird! I never said I was good at carving pumpkins!!]

November included both a board game night and our ice-cream social for the adopt-a-student program. We had a great turn-out from the congregation and LSA for both events. Building relationships is part of what all of this is about! We hope you'll join us for our events in the Spring! It is a great opportunity to get to know our students outside of Sunday worship.

Peace,  
**Pastor Alex**

### LSA Calendar of Events

- **December 2:** *Saturday Morning Coffee at Aromas* in Merchants Square around **11:00 AM**
- **December 8:** *W&M Last Day of Classes*



LSA Ice Cream Social on November 12



## NOTES FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

All donations for 2023 must be received by **Sunday, December 24**. Any donations that come in after that date will be credited to 2024. If you have any questions about donations you can reach me at [finsec@saintstephenlutheran.net](mailto:finsec@saintstephenlutheran.net) or 757-869-2949.

Also, please remember to turn in your **Pledge for 2024**. You can mail in your Pledge Card, place it in the offering plate, or you can call me at 757-869-2949 or email me at [finsec@saintstephenlutheran.net](mailto:finsec@saintstephenlutheran.net).

**Karen Nester, Financial Secretary**



## MUSIC NOTES

Advent is my favorite season of the church year. Unfortunately, except for the 12 days of Christmas and Holy Week, it is probably the shortest. During this season, the choirs, bells, and children will all be presenting wonderful selections highlighting this season of waiting and anticipation.

On Advent 1 (December 3), our choirs will sing an arrangement of *We Are Waiting*, a Taize inspired anthem written and composed by John Helgen, a young Minnesotan (he's my age, so very young!). Helgen was a practicing attorney until 1999, when he saw the light and became a full-time church musician. Originally written for the lighting of the Advent wreath, *We Are Waiting* is now in our *All Creation Sings* supplement.

Advent 2 (December 10) brings musical leadership from our St. Stephen Ringers accompanying our gathering hymn, *Hark, the Glad Sound!* as well as several other selections. The choirs sing Anne Krentz Organ's *There's a Voice in the Wilderness*. A graduate of Valparaiso University, Organ is director of music ministries at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, Illinois. She has many choral, handbell, organ and piano compositions in publication and is a past president of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians.

While we still celebrate Advent 3, the **11:00 am** worship service on **December 17** will feature our Faith Formation choirs and chimers in their annual "Christmas" program. They will be presenting Mark Patterson's *A Trilogy for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany*. Patterson lives right down the road. He is the Director of Music at Salisbury Presbyterian Church in Midlothian, VA. Besides a piano collection, various musicals and choral compilations, volumes of vocal solos, Dr. Patterson has over 200 compositions in print. He received his PhD in Music Education from Texas Tech University.

Advent 4 is **December 24** (one service only, **9:45 am**), and while you may want to sing Christmas carols that morning, you will need to return that evening for our traditional Christmas Eve services to do so. Advent 4 celebrates Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel, who tells her that God will give her a son Jesus. We hear her

response in today's Gospel reading known as the Magnificat. We will hear it once again as the choirs sing Ralph Vaughan Williams' interpretation of the Magnificat.

An offering of two different worship services happens this **Christmas Eve: a more "traditional" one at 7:30 pm** (Please plan to come at **7:00 pm** for preservice music from our singing choirs and St. Stephen ringers) and a **"contemplative" one at 10:00 pm** with soloist Emily Rosenberger singing *O Holy Night* and *Gesu Bambino*. Lastly, join us on **December 31** for one service only at **9:45 am** to keep the Christmas season going with our Lessons and Carols Worship Service.

Happy December, everyone.

**Karen Ives, Music Director**

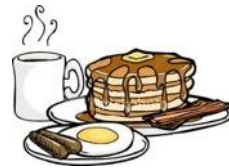
## CHRISTMAS CAROLING



We will have Christmas Caroling outside on **Sunday, December 17** for some of our ill and homebound folks.

**4:00 pm** – We meet in the Fellowship Hall to organize.

**6:00 pm** – We return to the Fellowship Hall to share a meal together. Bring chili and/or cornbread to share (If you're not able to make the caroling, feel free to join the meal gathering – and vice versa!)



## MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **December 5** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.
- **December 7** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** of this month.

Both gatherings take place at **8:00 AM** at the Colonial Pancake House, at the corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, Williamsburg, VA. The get-togethers promote conversation and friendship in a casual setting.

## A MUSICAL REFORMATION SUNDAY

For the first time ever, the St. Stephen Orchaband shared their gifts accompanying our hymns for Reformation Sunday.



Orchaband personnel are:

Bassoon: Linda Baumgarten  
Clarinet: Jeffery Berry, Bill Dichtel, Jane deSolms  
Euphonium: Theo Bergh  
Flute: Sonja Cave  
French Horn: Rich Brown  
Saxophone: Erika Cave  
Trombone: Jennifer Dabel  
Trumpet: Jim Larsen, Marj Gottschalk-Trone  
Violin: Ingrid Brown



The Faith Formation Choir "helped" the adults lead Psalm 46 on Reformation Sunday.

**Karen Ives, Music Director**



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

Thank you for your recent endowment gift of \$1,000. Endowment gifts are managed by the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust and make a real difference in the lives of others. Thanks to your generosity, the ELCA is a church at work in the world, doing Gods' work with our hands, proclaiming Christ's redeeming love to all. I pray that you will find great joy in knowing what your gift makes possible in the lives of others.

As the ELCA, we do more together than we ever could do alone. We are a church that rolls up its sleeves and solves problems - doing God's work in the world. Thank you for your support.

Annette C. Shoemaker  
Executive Vice President, ELCA Foundation



The Williamsburg Volunteer Fire Department would like to thank you for your donation of \$100. Without your generosity, we would not be able to provide the high-quality services necessary for the citizens of Williamsburg.

Williamsburg Volunteer Fire Department



EnCircle educators, caregivers, caseworkers, foster families, and counselors serve over 1,000 children, families and adults every day. Thank you for being a part of the enCircle family. You are making the world a more loving place!

The enCircle Philanthropy Team



## STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

So here we are at the beginning of the final month of 2023. For several weeks now, the lessons we have heard in worship have focused on the Day of the Lord, when God will put an end to sin and suffering as the Creation is renewed. Is it merely coincidence that these same several weeks have been filled with news coverage of Hamas's deadly attack on Israel and Israel's deadly response within Gaza? One need not look any further than the daily news to find ample reason to join the age-old Advent prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus. Quickly come!"

While we may be helpless to end the suffering in the Middle East and elsewhere, we are not helpless absolutely. We can support the efforts of Lutheran World Relief and other entities who are in place and actively working to aid those caught in the conflict. We can most certainly pray for an early and peaceful end to the fighting. We can urge our Senators and Representatives to work for peace. We can do all of these things (and more besides) as part of our work as stewards of God's Creation.

God has blessed us richly. And the Bible is quite clear that much is expected of those who have received much. May we live into that expectation, using what is ours to heal the world around us. And may God use the limited response that we, as individuals, can make, joining our efforts with the efforts of other stewards in such a way as to heal the world. Let us enter fully into God's work of redeeming the world through love and grace.

Your brother in Christ,  
**Jim Larsen**



These members have new addresses that will be printed in the next Directory:

Doug Crinklaw  
Joey and Katy Wood



Welcome to our six new members who joined our congregation on November 12:

**Gerry and Sandy Johnson**  
**Carol Brown**  
**Becky Pittman**  
**Kathy Schroder**  
**Elanor Berg**

For contact information please contact the office or check the most recent Directory.

## PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

We are moving ahead with a new St. Stephen Pictorial Directory. The photo sessions will take place on **December 11 and 12 from 2:00 PM until 8:30 PM** and **December 19 from 12 noon until 6:30 PM (this will be the last day)**. You will need to reserve your households time slot. To schedule your photography appointment online, simply go to [www.ucdir.com](http://www.ucdir.com), click on photography appointment scheduling login on the right side, enter VA234 in the Church Code field and enter **photos** in the Church Password field. Follow the prompts to schedule your family's appointment time. If you have any questions please contact **Hollie Jones**, Parish Administrator, [office@saintstephenlutheran.net](mailto:office@saintstephenlutheran.net), 757-229-6688.

There is not a sitting fee and every household will receive one free 8x10 of the photo that they select to be in the directory. You will also have the option to purchase additional photos and have the opportunity to have multiple photos taken. Every household that sits for their photo will also receive a copy of the directory.



## ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

November seemed to fly by this year! We have had so much fun this month coming together for a *Pancakes in PJs Dinner* to support our Scholarship Fund. The Church volunteers did an amazing job making pancakes and sausages for the families and they did not disappoint. We also want to thank you for your support of our *Spirit Night* at Sal's by Victor Italian Restaurant. It was so lovely seeing both Preschool parents and Church members out together. We are so grateful to Sal's for their extremely generous gift to our Preschool and for allowing us to have an evening spent with them.

The Hippos, Bears, and Frogs enjoyed a beautiful warm fall day at Jamestown Settlement and a highlight as always exploring the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed* and *Discovery*. It's so neat to be able to climb aboard the ships.

Our families donated over 20 bags of food to FISH Food Pantry and Clothing center here in Williamsburg. As you most likely know, there is a national shortage in food banks with available supplies dwindling. Our Preschool parents are always so generous in supporting our annual food drive and it is a great way for our children to learn the gift of giving and serving others.

Our children will help Pastor Jon tell the Christmas story for their parents on Thursday, December 14, and Friday, December 15. Our music teacher, Anthony Williams, is teaching the children songs and our art teacher, Kelly Kirkpatrick, is designing the costumes for the program. We will also celebrate Christmas with a birthday cake for the baby Jesus.

Thank you for supporting our school in so many ways! We pray you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving and have a Merry Christmas!

**Holly Ready, Preschool Director**



Pancakes in PJs Dinner – Kitchen Crew



Exploring Jamestown Settlement



20 bags of food for FISH



Celebrating Veteran's Day

# STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



*"Above all, trust in the slow work of God."* – Teilhard de Chardin

About halfway into my spiritual direction training, my small group began meeting once a month for supervision. In these meetings, we looked at the challenges we faced as spiritual directors. What kept us from being open and present to the movement of the Holy Spirit during our sessions for the benefit of our directees? We all took turns bringing our practice sessions to the group for guidance, and nearly every time our mentor would ask us the same question: how are you trusting the slow work of God?

We never liked that question. It's hard because if we were being honest with ourselves, we weren't trusting the slow work of God. Not really. We wanted our directees to have these wonderful epiphany moments that would lead to instant transformation and growth. We wanted happiness and peace for our directees, and we wanted them now! God needed to hurry up and make it better.

As Stephen Ministers, we also take time each month for supervision. This looks a bit different than Spiritual Direction, but the intention is the same. We check up on our relationship between ourselves and our care receivers while maintaining confidentiality. What is almost more important than examining how our care receiver is doing is examining our own challenges as Stephen Ministers. The question, how are you trusting the slow work of God, is just as relevant here. Out of love and concern for our care receivers, we wish we could move them through their grief and pain and into a brighter future quickly and efficiently. But that is not reality. The grief process takes time. It is slow and unsteady. It is two steps forward and one step back.

We are reminded constantly that our calling in Stephen Ministry is not to fix and make it better. Only God can do that. We are called to walk with our care receiver through God's slow work and be present for however long it takes. It is just that simple, and it is just that challenging. This process is the opposite of what our quick-fix, 10-step, just-buy-this-thing-and-you'll-be-happy culture has taught us all our lives. Once again, we

learn that God's calling is counter cultural. If we are ever to answer that call well, we must work to let go of what the world expects of us.

Because here's the thing: the slow work of God is painfully, excruciatingly, and frustratingly slow. But it works. I have witnessed the deep, beautiful transformation and joy that comes from allowing the journey to unfold as God sees fit.

Stephen Minister or not, many of us are currently caring for someone in pain. Many of us are supporting someone through a difficult situation that we just want to get through and make better. When you start to feel impatient or frustrated or hopeless in those times, I encourage you to take a deep breath. Then, as compassionately and lovingly as you can, ask yourself: how are you trusting the slow work of God?

**Christina Nelson, Stephen Minister**



## DECEMBER

2	Russ Dabel Peter Geier	Gisela Fashing
4	Aidan Jansson Sarah Toler	Mitchell Stauffer
6	Gerry Johnson	
7	Delaynie Wilkins	
9	Beatrice Ehrhardt	
12	Jean Gulesian	Barb Youngk
13	Birdie Burton Lori Harms	Marj Gottschalk-Trone
14	Hannalore Herion	
15	Carla Javier	
16	Lori Janke Tracie Powers	Diane McCurry
20	Kathryn Ogborn	Tom Peterkin
21	Casey Toler	Robert Voigt
24	Amy Bergh	Jan MacQueston
25	Ann Powers	
27	Karen Arledge	Lucianna Stimson
30	Rosalie Frey	





## DECEMBER BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES



### PRAYERS

The significance of baptism, Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, is “that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Your baptismal anniversary is an opportunity to light a baptismal candle and to give some prayer time to reflecting on your experiences during the past year on your journey in faith!

#### Pastor Jon Nelson

3	Soni York	
6	Klara Cave	
10	Sandy Brust	
11	Linda Vonderheide	
16	Billy Miller	
17	Pam Groman	
19	Chuck Frey	Magnolia Sulouff
	Penelope Sulouff	Sebastian Sulouff
24	Liam Janke	Ethan Jansson
26	Ursula Recktenwald	
28	Ailene Bartlett	Sonja Cave
29	Jayme Lawson	Lucianna Stimson

Others who were baptized in December:

Helen Allen                      Erika Geier

Were you baptized in December but your name isn't on the list above? Let us know!

**Join your prayers for healing** with God's desires for **Paula Agor, Aaren Battle, Ed Brown, Kristin Carter, Jack Harris, Sharon Jacobs, Marilyn Johnson, Evelyn Kernan, Jim Mayfield, Carole Meyer, David Nelson and Linda Reuben.**

**Pray for those unable to come to worship:** **Martin Bleck, Ed Brown, Birdie Burton, York Doerr, Bob and Angie Groom, Edith Haecker, Pat Janot, Jeanne Nelson, Darlene Simon, and Kay Wasaff.**

**Pray for these loved ones of our congregation:** Dawn Allen, Paula Battle, Donald and Carol Baum, Rose Baumgarten, Sally Blackburn, Mary Bloom, Amy Carl, Ann Bunn, Jerry & Elijah Connor, Judy Craun, Doug Crinklaw, Katie Czajkowski, Sophia Czajkowski, Judy Drezek, Joel Gillespie, Joan and Frank Goodhart, Catherine Harbison, Deanna Harbison, Bradley Kim Joan and Laurie Heintzeman, Char Henry, Lisa Hill, Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, The Kennedy family, Bob Lamoureux, Marnah Lund, Laura Margolin, Doug Mayes, Maddie Murray, Bob Myers, Silvana Oderisi, Lori Ogborn, Katie Orcutt, Paula Rega, Marci Ries, Sharon Rogers, Betty Roth, Inge Seiter, Kelsey Slay, Vasili Soultoukis, Chad Strausbaugh, Charley Underdahl, and Caleb Winig.



**FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING**

*Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*



**St. Stephen Lutheran Church  
612 Jamestown Road  
Williamsburg, VA 23185**

**The Quill      [www.saintstephenlutheran.net](http://www.saintstephenlutheran.net)      December 2023**

**Congregational Officers:**

<i>President</i>	<b>Julie Meeks</b>	
<i>Vice President</i>	<b>J.R. Lyons</b>	
<i>Treasurer</i>	<b>Pete Davis</b>	
<i>Financial Secretary</i>	<b>Karen Nester</b>	
	email	Finsec@

*Congregational Secretary*      **Alison Carney**

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 email: All email addresses are:  
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**Church Staff:**

<i>Pastor</i>	<b>Jon Nelson</b>	
	email	Pastorjn@
	<b>Alex Sheppard-Witt</b>	
	email	Pastorasw@
<i>Parish Administrator</i>	<b>Hollie Jones</b>	Office@
<i>Director of Music</i>	<b>Karen Ives</b>	MusicDir@
<i>Parish Nurse</i>	<b>Diana Tiller-Dichtel</b>	Parishnurse@
<i>Preschool Director</i>	<b>Holly Ready</b>	Preschool@

**Congregation Council:**

Jeffery Berry (Youth Member)  
 Pam Buckley  
 Alison Carney  
 Brandon Cave  
 Sandy Croushore  
 Nancy Egloff  
 Susan Kauffman  
 Corey Knestrick  
 J.R. Lyons  
 Julie Meeks  
 Paul Reier  
 Lou Rossiter  
 Roberta Sulouff

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