



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

January 2024



BODIES

One of the gifts we gave our parents for Vee's second Christmas was a DVD full of scenes from the first year of her life. Every now and again I will stumble upon that recording on my computer and re-watch it. It's amazing how much an infant changes in just one year. Vee went from being barely able to roll over to walking and (almost) talking in such a short amount of time. Truly, we are amazing creatures; and truly, our Creator is even more amazing.

Think about your body for a moment; one of the greatest gifts God has given you. Think about your body and marvel! Did you know that your nose can identify and remember more than 50,000 smells? One fourth of the bones in your body are in your feet. When you take one step you use up to 200 muscles. Your lungs contain up to 300 billion capillaries; if they were laid end to end they could reach up to 1500 miles. In 30 minutes the average human body will give off enough heat to bring half a gallon of water to boil. The focusing muscles of the eyes move around 100,000 times a day; to give your leg muscles the same workout, you would need to walk 50 miles every day.

It is so easy for us to take our bodies for granted. But when you stop and take stock, they're simply amazing! And there are a multitude of other wonderful things about our bodies too! But what often amazes me the most is our capacity for thought. So much of how Vee has changed began with a particular thought process. She saw mom or dad do it and started to figure out how to do it on her own. Sure, some things are likely instinctual, but most are learned. What an amazing thing THAT is!

God has given us a powerful gift in our brains and bodies. And yet, we so often misuse or ignore these gifts. But, in all honesty, our journey of faith needs careful thought as much as anything else! Perhaps the greatest way we can thank God for the great gift of our bodies and ourselves is to use them in careful and faithful ways.

As you consider the new year ahead of you, think about the gift of your bodies and minds. Consider how you have been using them and how you might take better care of them. Consider how you might continue the gift of learning that God began by giving you the gift of thought. Consider what memories you want to have, what accomplishments you want to look back on this time next year as 2024 comes to a close.

Set yourself a task for 2024; tackle learning a new language or skill. Train your body to undertake a new goal. Study rhetoric or critical thinking. Do the crossword every day. Train for a marathon. And do it, not out of pride or for personal fulfillment (though those are fine reasons too); but rather do it to the glory of God who has given you such great gifts.

May your 2024 be full of growth and joy. May you be ever mindful of God's great graciousness to you. And may you give glory to God in thought, word, and deed. Amen.

In Christ,
Pastor Jon

CONGREGATION COUNCIL



Our December meeting was held on December 12, 2023

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

- Additional estimates have been requested for our HVAC system replacement.
- A lengthy budget discussion included gratitude for our finance team, needs and goals, importance of extra care in managing expenses, reserve fund use, and staff compensation. Council approved staff bonuses, and a sequestration of 2-5% for the 2024 budget as presented. Congregation votes on budget at January 28 congregational meeting.
- The next St. Stephen and Our Saviour's shared ministry committee meeting is January 8. A shared ministry joint Council meeting is February 18.
- Julie Meeks and Jeffrey Berry will participate in 2024 online Synod Assembly.
- We reflected on Visioning, including ideas for community needs, possibly a laundry ministry such as Laundry Love, as well as serving students.
- The Theologian in Residence committee has scheduled Rev. James Cobb for early March.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for January 16.

Alison Carney, Secretary, Congregation Council



MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **January 4** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** of this month.
- **January 9** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the second **Tuesday** 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.

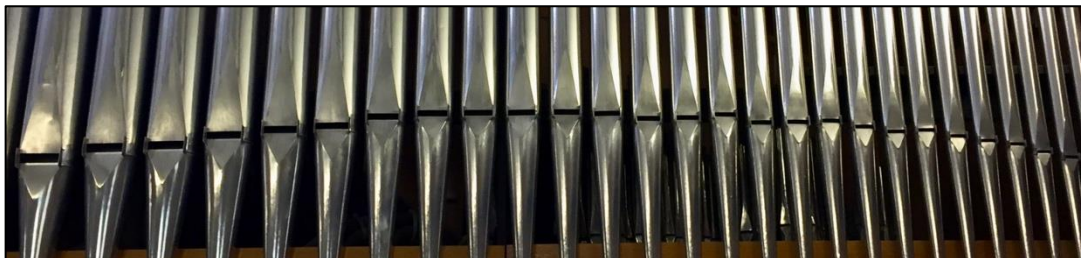
JANUARY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The January Congregational Meeting will be held following the 11:00 am service on **Sunday, January 28th, 2024**. We will review our mission statement, receive annual reports, elect delegates to the Virginia Synod Assembly, and approve a budget. We will also be taking up a constitutional amendment intended to allow youth representatives on the Congregation Council to serve four years rather than two. More details forthcoming!



Wilson and Betty Touhsaent

Cyndy Touhsaent (Jean Kuhn Memorial Fund)



CAMPUS MINISTRY



Happy New Year!

Our LSA students are on winter break. The Fall Semester flew by. I want to start by thanking you all for all that you did for our students this first semester. Thank you to all who cooked meals, who joined us for games, who “adopted” a student, who voted for pumpkins, who supported them and got to know them on Sunday mornings! We couldn’t do this without each one of you and the myriad of ways you support campus ministry. We can’t say it enough: thank you.

LSA elects officers near the end of the Fall Semester for the next calendar year. We held those elections electronically over the exam period. Again, a huge thank you to those who served in 2023. And a huge thank you to those willing to serve in 2024.

Our officers for 2024 will be:

- President: Mia Ryan
- Vice President: Ellie O’Neill
- Secretary: Jared Dewey
- Historian: Mary Parks
- Treasurer: TBD

Over the holiday break, we’ll meet - both as an executive team and with the campus ministry committee - to start planning for the Spring Semester. We’ll have a fuller schedule put together following that meeting. But as a general outline for the Spring:

LSA Calendar of Events

- **January 24:** Classes resume
- **January 28:** LSA Dinners resume
- **March 9-17:** Spring Break - NO LSA Dinners
- **April 14:** LSA Leads Worship
- **May 16-18:** Commencement
- **May 17, 3:00 pm:** Spiritual Celebration

We pray for safe travels and for a time of holy rest over the break for our LSA students.

Peace,
Pastor Alex

Thanks



Thank you for helping us at the FISH Clothes Closet during November. The generous citizens of Williamsburg, James City and York Counties, including the parishioners of St. Stephen's, have provided FISH with many clothes. The donations and clients keep our regular volunteers constantly busy, so we welcome additional helping hands.

We really appreciate your assistance with the sizing and final preparation of clothing for our clients. So many of the items have already found new homes. Your contributions may seem minor to you, but they are significant to us and the community. An additional benefit was that I enjoyed our time together as we all got to know each other.

Thanks and I hope to work with you again soon.

Cindy Tocci, FISH Clothes Closet Co-Coordinator



We look back at the past 12 months of work that we have accomplished at the Williamsburg House of Mercy and have a sense of wonder of everything accomplished:

- 46,253 individuals served on the drive-thru food pantry
- 17,421 meals prepared and served in our community kitchen
- 494 families received Thanksgiving meal ingredients
- 1,939 nights of shelter
- 105 moved into permanent supportive housing
- 117,636 diapers provided
- 294 mothers helped through HOPE pregnancy services
- 776 children received gifts on Christmas morning

This has been made possible with help from our donors, grants, community and faith partners.

You believe in our mission and we are grateful to the support today and always. Wishing you and yours a Merry Christmas and a Joyous 2024.

Kevin Fleming, Finance Director



MUSIC NOTES

January can be a harsh month with cold weather forecasts, with cloudy days still shortened by darkness, and with a sense of loneliness settling in because the hustle and bustle of holiday parties are a thing of the past. Sometimes we have a hard time leaving the warm comfort of our homes. However, we do need to get out and socialize with others – we need to maintain a sense of community. (Yes, I am stealing one of Pastor Jon’s favorite mantras!) Making music together is a great community activity. Have you made those New Year’s resolutions yet? Forget losing weight or going to the gym. Exercise your arms (and your brain) by ringing bells and chimes. Fill your lungs by singing in a choir. Renew your mental health by enjoying, laughing, and learning with your St. Stephen friends the love of music.

- Chancel Choir returns Wednesday, January 3 – 7:00 pm
- Matins Choir returns Sunday, January 8 – 8:00 am for warm-up and regular rehearsal following 8:30 am worship
- St. Stephen Ringers returns Thursday, January 11 – 5:30 pm
- Chime Time returns Sunday, January 28 – 10:00 am (for elementary age children and their parents!)

Let Karen know how you want to participate: musicdir@saintstephen.net.

Karen Ives, Music Director



Children’s Christmas Program: “Light of Hope” (December 17, 11:00 am Service)



STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

The concept of stewardship is not mainstream in our culture. It can be a rather slippery concept for us to grasp. When I talk about stewardship, I always talk in biblical terms. And I usually begin where the bible begins, with Genesis: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,...” According to our faith, God created everything that is. All plants and animals, the sun, moon, earth, and stars all were created by God. We might say, therefore, that everything belongs to God. Even our relationships with other people, animals, plants – with Creation itself – were established by God and in a sense still belong to God.

Yet, our position in Creation and our relationship to Creation’s various other expressions are not like anything else in Creation. In chapter 1, God gives human beings “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:28) In chapter 2, the man’s unique position in Creation is expressed differently. Genesis 2:15 states, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” So, which is it supposed to be? Do we rule over Creation (a simple interpretation of the word “dominion?” Or are we servants of Creation? Can it possibly be that we are both?

In short, the answer is “yes.” It not only can be both, but it must be both. Only this way of reading the biblical text will keep us from the heresy of accepting one part while throwing out another part. We are both lord and servant of God’s Creation. God has created things in order that life might abound. So we work to further that purpose. But God has given us the ability to envision new ways of caring for Creation, so we exercise our abilities to further God’s will. Just as we are saint and sinner, we are also lord and servant.

This is what I understand stewardship to be. God gives us each a position of freedom and responsibility in life. We are free to choose how to live. But we also have a responsibility to remember God’s will for our lives as we make our choices. We are free to do with Creation as we see fit, so long as we remember that God’s intention is in favor of the abundance of life – for us and for all of Creation.

Over the next few months, I hope to share with you a few more of my favorite “stewardship passages” from the Bible. Until then, may the new year be filled both with blessings and with opportunities to bless others, my fellow Stewards and beloved Children of God!

Your brother in Christ,
Jim Larsen





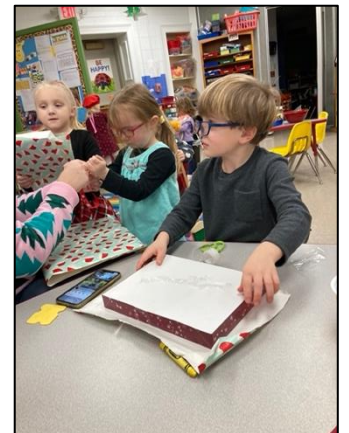
ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

December was a magical month filled with preparation for the Preschool Christmas Program. The students worked hard to learn the songs and create thoughtful gifts for their families. The Giraffes, Hippos, Bears and Frogs, along with Pastor Jon, and music teacher Anthony Williams celebrated by performing a wonderful rendition of the Christmas Story for their families. Afterwards, we all joined together for cake to celebrate Baby Jesus.

As we begin the New Year, the Preschool is looking forward to the **Winter Carnival on Sunday, January 21 from 2:00-4:00 pm**. All are welcome to join in the fun, play games, and enjoy delicious treats! There are prizes to be won, including baked goods and treats from the Cake Walk. We hope to see you there.

We hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Many Blessings,
Holly Ready, Preschool Director



STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



Stephen Ministry Class to Begin

As we head into the new year, having enjoyed our Christmas blessings and perhaps making some New Year's Resolutions, we look forward to 2024 as a new year to move ahead, make improvements and continue to make the world a better place. Finding new personal missions and ways to serve the Lord may be on your mind at this point. As many of you who attended the Ministry Fair in October saw, there are many wonderful ministries in our church and ways to improve life for others in our Church and in our community.

This may be the year that you may want to consider joining the Stephen Ministry group at St. Stephen. Stephen Ministers are volunteers from our Church who have made a strong commitment to go through fairly extensive training and to subsequently serve at least two years helping those who are facing individual crises of one type or another. The Stephen Ministers meet for about an hour a week with their care receivers for confidential counseling and listening sessions. Men are seen by male Stephen Ministers and women by female Stephen Ministers. Confidentiality is of utmost importance in this process.

The training to become a Stephen Minister is, admittedly, fairly extensive: The course begins this year on **January 23** and will finish up in May with about two hours and 30 minutes of class once a week during that time. There are reading assignments for the classes. Classes include discussions, some lectures, and some role-playing sessions. We participate with six other churches in Williamsburg with running the Stephen Ministry Training Course which adds to the training experience. Having been involved with the training course for a few years, I have seen that many feel initially intimidated only to come away by the end feeling that they had picked up new-found skills that proved valuable not only in Stephen Ministry, but in their personal lives in general. Many have said they wished they had had a course like that in college as it would have improved their subsequent life experience and their approach to life in general!

The rewards to being a Stephen Minister are very significant. The ability to develop a close, listening relationship with someone in crisis and walk with them through difficult times is a privilege and is very personally gratifying. Seeing someone's broken faith restored and knowing that you may have been helpful with that is indeed fulfilling.

We have been blessed over the years at Saint Stephen with having an active Stephen Ministry Program, and we are entering our 29th year of offering Stephen Ministry Services. Currently, we have five women and two men who are Stephen Ministers. We would welcome both men and women who wish to consider taking the class. If you are interested in finding out more about what is required, please send an e-mail to me at bill.dichtel@gmail.com. Please let me know of your interest as soon as possible as I need to get study materials for you for the class if you decide to join us.

Thanks for your consideration!

Bill Dichtel, Stephen Leader



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JANUARY

2	Elliott Lawson	
4	Kenny Spencer	Penelope Sulouff
5	Gayle Spencer	
6	Amanda Buckley	Melissa Buckley
	Jim Mayfield	Chris Punchard
7	Judy Joppa	
8	Carole Meyer	Hollie Jones
9	Karen Shoberg	
10	Jeffery Berry	
13	Peter Stauffer	
14	Elise Emanuel	
15	Brad Jefferson	Brandon Jefferson
	Brock Jefferson	Justice Jefferson
16	Julie Jefferson	Jim Nickols
17	Susan Bosworth	Ned Neidlinger
	Mira Powell	Sarah Shoenfelt
19	Chuck Frey	
20	Mark Gulesian	Andrew Teague
	Susan Neidlinger	
21	Tommy Peterkin	Emily Rossiter
22	Leah Hardenbergh	Julia Mahony
25	Margie Ehrhardt	
26	Tom Witt	
28	Nancy Carter	Tobias Janke
	Ethan Owens	
31	Corey Knestrick	John Joe Shoenfelt

To turn the phrase around, JOMO is focusing on finding joy and contentment, opting to miss out on activities and practicing self-care. It encourages a conscious choice of doing what you want to do and not being pressured into doing things we don't feel we will enjoy. JOMO gives us the ability to say "No, thank you" to invitations to do things you think you might really dread. JOMO allows you to be authentic and true to yourself.

While this is easy to tell you about, in reality, it may be harder to accomplish. Scrolling through social media causes us to feel sad, jealous or left out when we see what our friends are doing. A second benefit is to consider taking a step away from social media. You should focus more on quality in relation to your health than quantity related to doing a lot of things you may enjoy less. The benefits are that it can help increase productivity, improve relationships and therefore improve emotional and physical well-being.

If you are interested in taking a step toward missing out a little bit, try making some tech-free time. Set limits on how often and how long you will spend on social media. We can find a lot of interesting and informative things there, but it can easily consume our lives. For the new year, make a list of books you think you would like to read. You can check them out at the library and save money at the same time. Set boundaries on the amount of time you are going to spend attending activities. Learning to say "No" comes with setting these boundaries. Look at your calendar and schedule things in it that make you feel good about yourself. A massage, a day at the spa or even a lunch away from the regular hubbub will help to bring a little more relaxation and contentment to your life.

I plan to make this a peaceful and joyous new year. I hope you will as well.

Diana Tiller-Dichtel, Parish Nurse



STARTING THE NEW YEAR

Ok, you have heard of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), but I want to introduce you to JOMO (Joy of Missing Out). For background, FOMO is seeing someone doing something or being somewhere and you aren't there. You feel like you are missing out on something fun or enjoyable. But perhaps, the fun is in **not** doing that thing that you feel so sad about not doing.





JANUARY 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

- 1 Jane Gingerich
- 5 Kathryn Harms
- 11 Sandy Croushore
- 12 Barbara Youngk
- 13 Alyssa Martin
- 15 Travis Meermans Karen Sanderlin
- Kenny Spencer
- 20 Carl Stauffer
- 31 Sammi Crittenden

Others who were baptized in January:

- Karen Arledge York Doerr

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

Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Aaren Battle, Ed Brown, Kristin Carter, Jack Harris, Sharon Jacobs, Marilyn Johnson, Evelyn Kernan, David Maris, Jim Mayfield, Carole Meyer, Marie 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: Benita, Paula Battle, Donald and Carol Baum, Rose Baumgarten, Sally Blackburn, Mary Bloom, Steve Boyles, Ann Bunn, Amy Carl, Jerry & Elijah Connor, Judy Craun, Doug Crinklaw, Katie Czajkowski, Sophia Czajkowski, Judy Drezek, Charlie Eidson, Joel Gillespie, Joan and Frank Goodhart, Catherine Harbison, Deanna Harbison, Bradley Kim Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Char Henry, Lisa Hill, Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, the Kennedy family, Marnah Lund, David Maris, Laura Margolin, Doug Mayes, Becky Murphy, Ed Moninger, John and Pollie Morison, Maddie Murray, Bob Myers, Silvana Oderisi, Lori Ogborn, Katie Orcutt, Shary Raske, Paula Rega, Marci Ries, Sharon Rogers, Betty Roth, Lou Schuster, Inge Seiter, Kelsey Slay, Brant Smith, Vasili Soutoukis, Chad Strausbaugh, Charley Underdahl, and Caleb Winig.



FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**St. Stephen Lutheran Church
612 Jamestown Road
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