



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

January 2025



RESOLVE TO LOVE

January is a time of beginnings. It is also the time of year when people traditionally reflect on the past year and on their past in general. And out of those reflections often come New Year's resolutions. Where we try to begin new habits and live in new ways. Now, resolving to better ones' self is never a bad thing. But I have noticed that far too often such resolutions seem to be focused very inwardly. They are generally focused on things like your figure, health, diet, and/or habits.

But honestly, as Christians this inward focus is a bit problematic. Inward focus, even in attempting to better ourselves, is always dangerous. We can too easily become trapped in our inward focus. Too easily neglect others and God in our attempts to better ourselves. Such resolutions can blind us to where we need to be focused: on God and one another.

With that in mind, I now absolve you of your usual New Year's resolutions. Forgo worrying about dieting, or breaking bad habits, or anything of that sort and instead resolve to spend more time tending to your relationship with God. Resolve to try a new spiritual discipline (daily scripture reading, volunteering, praying the hours, meditation, tithing, writing, arts, etc.) that places your focus where it ought to be: on God. Resolve to listen more; listen more to one another, and listen more to God. And I assure you, with these resolutions in the front of your minds, those other more typical ones will take care of themselves. Physical well-being, emotional well-being, and spiritual well-being are all interlinked. Attending to God will help you attend to your health. Focusing on discipleship will bring about amazing things in your life and in the life of our community.

Write this down on a piece of paper and put it someplace where you will see it **frequently**: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

These words of Jesus describe the essence of discipleship. This is how the world will know us as Christians: that we "have love for one another." This is how the world will know we are disciples. We love God by loving one another. We practice discipleship for God by serving one another. We take on spiritual disciplines to move our attention and focus outwards from ourselves towards God and one another.

The essence of sin is idolatry and that which we idolize the most, that which we love to worship the most, is ourselves. Jesus constantly called his disciples outwards from themselves towards God and one another. Jesus issues that same call to us.

So here is my challenge to you (though it is really Jesus' challenge to all of us): resolve this year to love one another just as God loves you. Just imagine the things that will happen in our homes, our churches, our community, if that is always in the fore-front of our hearts and minds! This is not an easy task, but it is certainly the most worthy one. It is **the** task that God calls us to and **the** means by which we are known as Christians. Have a blessed, love-filled, and loving New Year!

In Christ,
Pastor Jon

CONGREGATION COUNCIL



Our December meeting was held on December 10, 2024.

In attendance: Pastor Jon Nelson, Julie Meeks, Jeffery Berry, Nancy Egloff, Lou Rossiter, Sandy Croushore, Roberta Sulouff, Beth Grant, Terri Larsen, Bill Dichtel, Alison Carney.

- Cox Powell, engineer/contractor for our HVAC replacement project, has acquired most of the equipment required to begin work and will begin once all equipment is on hand.
- Reconciling in Christ (RIC) committee continues working on a selection of one-on-one meetings to gather input.
- Council approved proposed 2025 budget of \$598,704; Congregation vote scheduled for the January Congregational Meeting.
- St. Stephen has two candidates who will begin Stephen Ministry training in January.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for January 14.

Alison Carney, Secretary, Congregation Council



STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

The January Stewardship focus will be seniors, and speakers from Williamsburg Faith in Action will be coming to talk to the congregation. Faith in Action is a nonprofit which provides transportation and other services for seniors, age 60 and up. Several members of St. Stephen's congregation are or have been drivers for Faith in Action. After completing training and background checks, volunteers sign up to transport seniors for trips to doctors' appointments, grocery runs, food pantry pick-ups, beauty shop visits and more.

Interested volunteers may also provide home visits, well check calls, pick up and deliver groceries, or help with household or yard chores.

Each week, the Faith in Action office provides a list of needs and volunteers can sign up for one or more trips or visits. There is no minimum number of volunteer trips required of any volunteer. This service allows for seniors to remain in their homes, but still have access to transportation and other needs. In addition to providing a useful service, volunteers have the opportunity to meet many of our local seniors.

Anyone interested in joining the volunteer cadre at Faith in Action, or in requesting services, can contact the organization at info@wfa.org or call (757) 258-5890. The organization also accepts monetary donations to help provide staff and training needs.

Susan Williamson

NEW MONTHLY WOMEN'S GROUP BEGINNING IN JANUARY



We are kicking off a new monthly Women's Group in January! Momentum from our fall St. Stephen Women's Retreat inspired this path forward. The group's emphasis is to nurture

one another on our faith journeys, continuing to explore and learn through spiritual development, study, discussion, and growth.

Facilitated by St. Stephen member **Sandy Johnson** and using a shared leadership model, the group sessions will be on the second Thursday of each month. To best accommodate as many interested folks as possible, we will offer both an afternoon and an evening session.

First Session: **Thursday, January 9, 2025**

Location: **St. Stephen library**

Choice of Times: **12:30-2:00 pm** or **7:00-8:30 pm**

No registration required. Just come and bring a friend!

If you want to join the new group but foresee a barrier to accessibility keeping you from doing so, please let us know and we will do our best to support your participation. Questions? Reach out to **Ina Berkey** (ina.berkey@cox.net).



MUSIC NOTES

Our very first worship service of the new Gregorian Calendar year will be a celebration of the Epiphany of Our Lord. Just as Christmas is always December 25, the Festival of the Epiphany is always January 6, the 12th day of Christmas. Whereas other festivals have “moving” dates, these two feast days – Christmas and Epiphany – are “set.” Technically, this year we are celebrating a day early (January 5), but that is sort of how we celebrate Christmas, too, with Christmas Eve worship services.

The theme for our Epiphany service, We Too Have a Star to Guide Us, comes from the fifth stanza of the hymn “Bright and Glorious is the Sky:”

*Guided by the star, they found
Him whose praise the ages sound.
We too have a star to guide us,
Which forever will provide us
With the light to find our Lord.*

Like those Wisemen, we too are drawn to the light of Christ. The service will begin with a procession, such as we can have in our worship space, that evokes the idea of the voyage that these Magi took to see the Messiah.

The hymn “Bright and Glorious” is a Danish one filled with images of light – bright, glorious, radiant, shining, a star as bright as day. Nikolai Grundtvig wrote this text at Christmastime in 1810. It was originally a 19-stanza poem for children. Grundtvig wrote about 1,500 hymns and was the most important Danish hymn writer of the 19th century. Another of his hymn’s texts is ELW #298, “The Bells of Christmas.” Jens Christian Aaberg translated Grundtvig’s text. Aaberg pared the hymn down to seven stanzas with the first line “Splendid are the heavens high.” The translation in our hymnal has six stanzas with the first line altered to “Bright and glorious is the sky.” Born in Denmark, Aaberg came to Minneapolis in 1901 and subsequently was ordained in the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Aaberg served parishes in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota and translated about 80 Danish hymns.

Karen Ives, Music Director

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

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 the love of music with your St. Stephen friends. Making music together is a great community activity. Talk to **Karen Ives** (musicdir@saintstephenlutheran.net) about how you can contribute to the music ministry by singing in a choir, ringing handbells, or playing a musical instrument. If you are interested in joining a “non-performing” group to meet for fellowship and ringing chimes (kind of like our yoga class or our book studies), speak to Karen. We can make that happen, too!

- **Matins Choir** returns **Sunday, January 5 – 8:00 am** warm-up for early service with rehearsal following worship.
- **Chancel Choir** returns **Wednesday, January 8 – 7:00 pm.**
- **St. Stephen Ringers** return **Thursday, January 9 – 5:30 pm.**
- **Faith Formation Music** returns **Sunday, January 26 – 10:00 am** (for elementary age children and their parents!)



MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **January 7** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.
- **January 9** – 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.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM - DECEMBER 15, 2024

Narrator – David Nelson
Zachariah – Walker Beatty
Elizabeth – Sonja Cave
Gabriel – Penelope Sulouff
Mary – Evelyn Judy
Joseph – Coleman Beatty

Angels – Mira Powell and Magnolia Sulouff
Shepherds – Klara Cave and Matthias Hallman

Choir – Coleman Beatty, Walker Beatty, Klara Cave, Sonja Cave, Mathias Hallman, Evelyn Judy, David Nelson, Mira Powell, Magnolia Sulouff, Penelope Sulouff

JANUARY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The January Congregational Meeting will be held following the 11:00 am service on **Sunday, January 26**. We will review our mission statement, receive annual reports, elect delegates to the Virginia Synod Assembly, and approve a budget. More details forthcoming!

Thank You



The season of giving is upon us. This is the time we make memories with family and friends while enjoying the holiday festivities. For many families this is a time of stress, anxiety, and hopelessness. It is our mission to make sure every family is fed and every parent is able to provide gifts for their child. We are excited to share we will be partnering with Grove Christian Outreach to provide families a Christmas Marketplace to choose gifts for the over 1,000 children who have been registered. Your donations have made this possible.

Thank you for your recent donation which allows us to:

- Provide diapers and formula for struggling parents
- Alleviate the worry of utility cutoffs to our clients who identify as ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed)
- Stock our community kitchen with fresh ingredients so we can serve lunch each week day
- Enable our case managers to walk a path of greater sustainability for those individuals in our permanent supportive housing programs
- Purchase shelf-stable food and farm fresh produce and dairy to ensure our weekly food pantry distribution is robust for our neighbors faced with food insecurity

Our 2024 Giving Tuesday goal is \$50,000 which will be used for our HOPE Pregnancy expansion. HOPE is our fastest growing mission with an additional 81 new clients since July 1. The Giving Tuesday campaign will continue through December 31, 2024. Thank you for participating in our effort to grow HOPE to better serve families in need of assistance in Greater Williamsburg.

Lisa Pacheco, Director of Development



ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

In November, we delivered 24 bags and two boxes of food to FISH, plus some clothes, household cleaners and bathroom necessities! So grateful for the sweet, giving families that make up our preschool community!

December has been full of holiday magic as our phenomenal teachers and staff have created beautiful artwork with our students, taught them holiday songs for our Christmas Celebration, and taught them more about Jesus, the reason for all the celebrations. Please stop by the Williamsburg Regional Library in downtown Williamsburg before December 31 to see our little artists work on display. Mrs. Kirkpatrick has been hard at work with them and it really is quite wonderful to see.

Thank you for your support in our first ever RiverMutt Ice Cream FUNdraiser! Please mark your calendars for our **Winter Carnival on Sunday, January 12 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm**. We will need volunteers to help run the stations, set-up and break-down. We would also love donations in the form of baked goods and cakes for our "Cake Walk" and snack offerings. Please reach out to Jessica Kimball at preschool@saintstephenlutheran.net if you are able to volunteer or donate. Thank you!

Jessica Kimball, Preschool Director



STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



Depression at the New Year

Most of us look forward to the joy of the holidays. We love visits with the extended family members at Christmas. The gift exchanges and wonderful holiday meals are a great treat! Watching children and grandchildren frolic and play with newly opened gifts is a charm. Coming to Church and enjoying the Christmas festivities is a thrill. What's not to enjoy?

For some, however, the holidays can shepherd in a time of sadness. Some who have lost family members may be spending the joyous holidays alone, suggesting that wonderful times are in the past. It magnifies their feelings of loneliness. Others have seen their families dispersed geographically and unable to easily gather for the holidays. Still others may have seen their families become politically divided, estranged by issues such as differences in ideology or other issues where they don't see eye-to-eye and where family and social relationships have broken, seemingly irreparably. Divorce has split many families leading to depression and regret. Very commonly, chronic illness, dementia or other medical impairment has been the culprit leading to family breakdown, division, and loss of support and eventual depression. Depression is so common at this time of year that there are a couple of clinical terms for it: holiday blues or seasonal affective disorder.

As all of us watch out for our friends and acquaintances in the Church, just be aware that not everyone may be as upbeat after the holidays as you are because of the wonderful Christmas that you have enjoyed. We all need to take the time to listen to how all of those around us are doing. If you sense the someone is not doing well, take time to listen. Take time to sit down for coffee with them and get more of a sense of how deep their sadness is. Just seeing that you care and are showing an interest makes a **huge difference** in many cases. But please, follow-up with them soon or if at the beginning you sense very deep sadness or depression, please notify **Pastor Nelson** or **Bill Dichtel** with the Stephen Ministry Service so that we can mobilize additional resources.

If desired by the individual, we can set up for a Stephen Minister to visit regularly. Stephen Ministers are individuals who have undergone extensive training and have significant experience in confidential listening and Christian counseling to help those going through crisis periods. We would be more than happy to help anyone experiencing such feelings.

Bill Dichtel, Stephen Leader
(757) 232-5334



JANUARY

4	Kenny Spencer	Penelope Sulouff
5	Gayle Spencer	
6	Jim Mayfield	Chris Punched
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	
19	Chuck Frey	
20	Susan Neidlinger	
21	Emily Rossiter	
22	Leah Hardenbergh	Julia Mahony
25	Margie Ehrhardt	
26	Tom Witt	
28	Nancy Carter	Tobias Janke
	Ethan Owens	
31	Corey Knestrick	



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
- 11 Sandy Croushore
- 12 Barbara Youngk
- 15 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 **Ed Brown, Kristin Carter, Bob and Ginny Cummings, Jack Harris, Sharon Jacobs, Donna Kittelson, Jim Mayfield, Carole Meyer, Helen Nelsen, Paul Reier and George Vonderheide.**

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

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Susan, Charles Baugh, Donald and Carol Baum, Eleftheria Beck, Tom Beck, Sally Blackburn, June Brantley, Linda Bonfiglio, Mary Bloom, Amy Carl, Karin Cavanaugh, Chris Clarke, Amaree Cluff, Ruth Ann Coski, Judy Craun, Ginny Cummings, Judy Drezek, Becky Drury, Darrin and Rosemary Dunn, Tanya Fritz, David Gade, Joel Gillespie, Greg Gildner, Joan and John Goodhart, Charee Hampton, Sue Hassan and family, Andy Havola, Nick Havola, Bradley Kim Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Lisa Hill, Jaxon Ireland, Claudia Jacobik, Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, The Kennedy family, Jenn Kramer, Chantal Lacroix, Marnah Lund, Trish and Sara and Matthew Macerelli, Keara Mahony, Laura Margolin, Jack Mayfield, Doug MacKenzie, The Keith Meins family, Liz Montalvo, Ed Moninger, Kim Morris, Bob Myers, Coral Pumley, Kurt Recktenwald, Kurtis Schultz, Lou Schuster, Inge Seiter, Pamela Sharp, Chad Strausbaugh, Al Stern, Monika Stern, Charley Underdahl, Brenda Webster, Caleb Winig, and Elaine Wrich.



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 January 2025

Congregational Officers:

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<i>Treasurer</i>	Brian Agor	757-561-5889
<i>Financial Secretary</i>	Karen Nester	757-869-2949
	email	Finsec@
<i>Congregational Secretary</i>	Alison Carney	703-819-6607

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Church Staff:

<i>Pastor</i>	Jon Nelson	320-295-8861
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<i>Director of Music</i>	Karen Ives	MusicDir@
<i>Preschool Director</i>	Jessica Kimball	Preschool@

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