



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

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Spring 2026

Sunday Worship: 10:30a
(Fellowship BEFORE)

Reverend Brenda L. Greenwald

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**Holy Week Schedule BELOW,
Lenten Schedule INSIDE**

Mar. 29 **JOINT Palm Sunday Worship + Potluck** 9a **Gethsemane**

Bring a **dish to share** as we trace Jesus' path into Jerusalem!

Apr. 1 No Soup or Worship this night, as this is Holy Week.

Apr. 3 **Good Friday Worship** 12p Worship: **St. Stephen's**

Apr. 5 **Easter Sunday Worship** 9a Worship: **Gethsemane**

9a Breakfast: **St. Stephen's**

10:30a Worship: **St. Stephen's**



We continue to hold the following in prayer:

Amber, Donna, Gary, Jim G, Jim R, Richie, Rob, Roger, Sue M

Thank you for holding the friends and families of our Congregants in your prayers. Contact the Office with any corrections.



3 Carol Sundstrom
5 Jim Roberts
9 Sue Hess
10 Shawn Anger
15 Danielle Bergquist
15 Todd Nehls
25 Patti Brooks
29 Karen Grundstrom



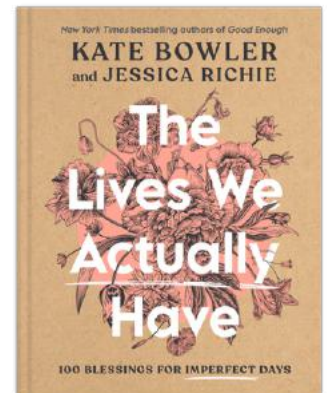
1 Kelly Francour
6 Morgan Bergquist
17 Janice Sederquist
21 Rich Smith
26 Tammy Parrett
30 Lily Keyzers

***We invite you to pray for those serving in the military:
Jordan Baril, Jay Chapple, Toby Irish, Brent Jurmu***

Wednesday Gatherings During Lent 2026

Our 2026 Lenten blessings and homilies come from **"The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days"** written by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. As they say: "Lent is our annual rehearsal of the cosmic moment when Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection will change how we experience death. Death will not be the defining truth about us. Someday we will be freed from the gorgeous and horrible limitations of our human lives and we will live forever with God."

But first Jesus suffers and dies. We walk with him. And he walks with us. Jesus will walk with us through whatever kind of Lenten day you are having. The lovely one. The garbage one. The one that barely seems like it counted at all. As we toggle through every kind of emotion - boredom, devastation, happiness, irritation - we want to say: bless this Lent."



Join us as we journey through the season of Lent. Each Wednesday, we will share a simple Meal and Worship together. We'll rotate between our 2 locations throughout the season, so be sure to note where we'll be.

**WEDNESDAY
NIGHTS**

March 4	5:15p Meal, 6p Worship	Gethsemane
March 11	5:15p Meal, 6p Worship	St. Stephen's
March 18	5:15p Meal, 6p Worship	Gethsemane
March 25	5:15p Meal, 6p Worship	St. Stephen's

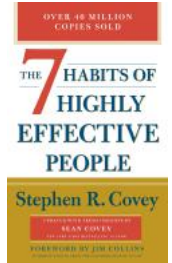
(No Meal or Worship on Wednesday, April 1, as it is Holy Week.)

Seek First to Understand...

Rev. Brenda L. Greenwald

Dear Church,

Back in 2002, I had the absolute joy of being part of a Planning Team for a brand, new Elementary School in Castle Rock, Colorado. To quickly and thoughtfully get our Team on the same page, our Principal introduced us to the book "**7 Habits of Highly Effective People**" by Stephen Covey. She purchased a hard-copy of the book, and LITERALLY tore the book into pieces, giving each one of us a Habit. Mine was "**Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then To Be Understood.**" Basically, it's the principle of intentional respect and listening before we speak. *Little did my Principal know, she was preparing me for a life in ministry!*



Ah, the age old wisdom of **LISTENING** before we speak. **King Solomon** wrote about this LONG ago in the book of Proverbs 18:13. Here are 3 of my favorite translations:

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. (KJV)

To answer before listening - that is folly and shame. (NIV)

Answering before listening is both stupid and rude. (MSG)

Think about it: we spend **YEARS** encouraging our children how to **SPEAK**: it's one of the first questions we ask new parents upon seeing the babbling baby: "*Are they talking yet? What was their first word?!*" Then, we send those kiddos to school, and spend **MORE** time teaching them how to express those words: learning the alphabet so they can write, penmanship so they write things legibly, reading so they can share what words they read.

WHEN, however, were we taught to **LISTEN?!** Which subject in school taught us how to **PAUSE** our brains when another is speaking, and truly **absorb** what they are saying? Truth be told, we weren't taught! We rarely take the time to **SEEK** what the other person is saying - we usually skip the part where we "*heareth*" and jump right to the part where we "*answereth*". And what does that gain us? A **frustrating** interaction that turns into **dueling dialogues**, when it could have been a real conversation.

It goes **DEEPER** than that, though: Habit 5 doesn't just ask us to listen, it asks us to **understand**. Empathize. Relate. It *doesn't* ask us to immediately jump in with how **WE** might have experienced the



same thing. We pause to **LISTEN** so that we can **UNDERSTAND** the other person's feelings - their words, their tone, perhaps even how their spirit is doing that day. **THAT's** where relationships begin: when we seek to understand the person with whom we are relating, **NOT** by trying to force OUR story upon them.

I sat for **YEARS** at a lunch table with a colleague who was only interested in being understood. She in no way sought to listen (*much less understand*) ANY of the people seated at our table. As **SOON** as we had shared something about ourselves (*between quick bites during our 20-minutes lunches*), she would immediately jump in with a story about herself. She had already **filtered** the story through her OWN perspective, and turned our story into hers. It's not that we didn't want to hear about **HER** experiences in life, it's just that she never took the time to understand **OURS**.

King Solomon was on to something when he penned those wise proverbs back in the day: when we listen with the intent to relate - to **understand** - we get to create this precious space where others can share their story and their perspective and their emotions. **THAT** is how we get to **understand** one another, and **THAT** is how we build upon our relationships and connections as friends and as disciples.

Seeking with you, dear Church,

Fr. Brenda

Our First, Livestreamed Service – January 25, 2026



Want to watch a Service again?

Go to **youtube.com/@GSSMichigan**

to find our YouTube Channel. Click on the **LIVE** tab,
and then click on the video you'd like to watch.

Daily Bible Readings: March 2026

Sun, Mar. 1	Jesus Serves	John 13:1-17
Mon, Mar. 2	Judas' Betrayal Foretold	John 13:21-30
Tues, Mar. 3	Peter Will Deny Jesus	John 13:31-38
Wed, Mar. 4	Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled	John 14:1-7
Thurs, Mar. 5	Jesus Is the True Vine	John 15:1-7
Fri, Mar. 6	The Hour Has Come	John 17:1-5
Sat, Mar. 7	Jesus Is Arrested	John 18:1-11
Sun, Mar. 8	Peter Denies Jesus	John 18:12-27
Mon, Mar. 9	My Enemies Will Fall	Psalms 27:1-14
Tues, Mar. 10	God Does Not Speak in Secret	Isaiah 45:14-19
Wed, Mar. 11	Jesus Is Going to the Father	John 14:8-12
Thurs, Mar. 12	Jesus Will Send an Advocate	John 14:13-17
Fri, Mar. 13	Not Left Orphaned	John 14:18-21
Sat, Mar. 14	The Advocate Will Teach Them	John 14:23-29
Sun, Mar. 15	Jesus before Pilate	John 18:28-40
Mon, Mar. 16	Abide in Jesus' Love	John 15:8-11
Tues, Mar. 17	Love One Another	John 15:12-17
Wed, Mar. 18	You Will Be Persecuted	John 15:18-21
Thurs, Mar. 19	You Will Testify	John 15:22-27
Fri, Mar. 20	Keep You from Stumbling	John 16:1-4a
Sat, Mar. 21	Jesus Is Going Away	John 16:4b-7
Sun, Mar. 22	Jesus Is Sentenced	John 19:1-16a
Mon, Mar. 23	The Spirit Will Teach	John 16:8-12
Tues, Mar. 24	The Spirit Will Guide You to Truth	John 16:13-16
Wed, Mar. 25	The Disciples Will See Jesus Again	John 16:17-22
Thurs, Mar. 26	Ask and You Shall Receive	John 16:23-28
Fri, Mar. 27	The Disciples Will Be Scattered	John 16:29-33
Sat, Mar. 28	Jesus Prays to God	John 17:6-9
Sun, Mar. 29	A Different Kind of King	John 19:16b-22
Mon, Mar. 30	Not One Is Lost	John 17:10-13
Tues, Mar. 31	Protect Them from Evil	John 17:14-19

Daily Bible Readings: April 2026

Wed, Apr. 1	Why Have You Forsaken Me?	Psalm 22:1-5
Thurs, Apr. 2	The Crucifixion	John 19:23-30
Fri, Apr. 3	Jesus Is Buried	John 19:31-42
Sat, Apr. 4	People Mock Me	Psalm 22:6-11
Sun, Apr. 5	Good News in the Garden	John 20:1-18
Mon, Apr. 6	Lament Turned to Praise	Psalm 22:19-22
Tues, Apr. 7	Lament turned to Praise	Psalm 22:23-26
Wed, Apr. 8	Lament turned to Praise	Psalm 22:27-31
Thurs, Apr. 9	God Calls the People to Be Witnesses	Isaiah 44:6-8
Fri, Apr. 10	The Song of the Suffering Servant	Isaiah 53:1-6
Sat, Apr. 11	Like a Lamb Led to Slaughter	Isaiah 53:7-12
Sun, Apr. 12	The Disciples Believe the Good News	John 20:19-31
Mon, Apr. 13	Jesus on the Seashore	John 21:1-14
Tues, Apr. 14	Care for My Sheep	John 21:15-19
Wed, Apr. 15	Jesus' Ascension	Acts 1:6-11
Thurs, Apr. 16	Peter's Sermon about Jesus	Acts 2:22-36
Fri, Apr. 17	Life in the First Church	Acts 2:37-47
Sat, Apr. 18	Saul Persecutes the Church	Acts 8:1b-3
Sun, Apr. 19	Saul Discovers the Good News	Acts 9:1-19a
Mon, Apr. 20	Saul Begins to Preach	Acts 9:19b-25
Tues, Apr. 21	Saul Comes to Jerusalem	Acts 9:26-31
Wed, Apr. 22	Barnabas and Saul Commissioned	Acts 13:1-12
Thurs, Apr. 23	Council of Jerusalem	Acts 15:1-21
Fri, Apr. 24	Timothy Joins Paul	Acts 15:36--16:5
Sat, Apr. 25	Conversion of Lydia	Acts 16:11-15
Sun, Apr. 26	Rejoicing in the Good News	Acts 16:16-34
Mon, Apr. 27	Paul Released from Jail	Acts 16:35-40
Tues, Apr. 28	Conversion of Cornelius, Pt 1	Acts 10:1-23
Wed, Apr. 29	Conversion of Cornelius, Pt 2	Acts 10:24-33
Thurs, Apr. 30	Conversion of Cornelius, Pt 3	Acts 10:34-48



2025 Annual Meeting Minutes

Meeting Held on Sunday, January 25, 2026



1. WELCOME

Rev. Brenda Greenwald welcomed everyone to the 2025 Annual Congregational meeting of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, and introduced the Council members: Council President John Starzynski, and Council Members, Cheri Leiphart, Kami Salo, Donna Tennesen and Donna Thonne. Explanations of Quorum were stated and attendance was taken. To make the Quorum, 11 voting members were needed, 27 were present. Quorum was met.

Those in Attendance were: Harlan Anderson, Judy Anderson, Shawn Anger, Carrie Bright, Kenzie Bright, Sean Bright, Sandy Chaney, Jane Christenson, Pastor Dave Christenson, Nick Diehm, Alvin Etelamaki, Sharon Etelamaki, William Grundstrom, Angela Keyzers, Gary Klatt, Tracy Klatt, Cheri Leiphart, Keith Olson, Shirley Olson, Cindy Roush, Janet Salo, Kami Salo, Wayne Salo, John Starzynski, Donna Tennesen, Wayne Thill, Donna Thonne

2. **Council President (CP)** John Starzynski led with the **Opening Prayer**.
3. 2025 Meeting **Called to Order** at 11:49a by CP John
4. Acceptance of **AGENDA**: **Motion to accept: Sean Bright 2nd: Sharon Etelamaki**
5. **MINUTES**: 2024 Annual Meeting. **Motion to accept: Keith Olson 2nd: Angela Keyzers**

6. CONGREGATIONAL OFFICER REPORTS

- **BISHOP'S REPORT:** The 2025 Northern Great Lakes Synod report by Bishop Katherine Finegan was focused on 1 Corinthians 3: 6-9: ***I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. We may sow the seeds and water the seeds but only God gives the growth.*** Bishop Katherine states "You cannot make a bean grow by pulling on it!" We may nurture the seeds of faith and ministry, but it is God who gives the growth.
- **PASTOR'S REPORT:** Pastor Brenda's report focuses on **WORK** and **GROWTH**. She encourages us to **WORK** for the sake of one another! She has watched us **GROW** in ministry by **WORKING** together at meetings and making donations to local shelters. She has saw us **GROW** together in **worship** as we enjoy new hymns. She has seen us **GROW** together as we welcome new people into the body of Christ and into our pews as we worship. **GROWTH** comes from **God** who **leads** our path, who **directs** our words and who **inspires** our hearts.
- **PAROCHIAL REPORT:** Baptized Membership at the end of 2025 **102** (-1 due to death, +2 for transfers). Confirmed Membership at end of 2025: 72. Active Participants (attending, giving, volunteering) in Congregational Life in 2025: 67. Average Weekly Attendance: 45 (High of 116 people on Christmas Eve, Low of 32 on Nov. 16) We took time to remember and pray for **+Pat Kaczmarczyk+ and +Sandy Baumler+**
- **COUNCIL PRESIDENTS' REPORT:** John thanked all St. Stephen's members and Pastor Brenda for their support this year. He said there were many exciting events in 2025, the biggest one being our 80th. Anniversary celebration. It has been 45 years since he and his wife Pattie were welcomed to St. Stephen's. To this day he says they still feel blessed to know the care and love of our members that will keep our congregation alive and thriving into the future.

Motion to accept ALL reports: Sean Bright

2nd: Pr Dave Christenson

CARRIES

7. MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

- **Bethesda Cemetery:** Over 545 graves have been photographed, recorded and over 97% GPS coordinated. Teams of caretakers have tended the grounds and graves. Wally Majkrzak, our volunteer Sexton, works with the funeral home and families for burial arrangements. In 2025, a new sign, a lighted flagpole, benches, plaques, and 5 new trees have enhanced the grounds and the holy resting place of our loved ones.
- **Faith Formation:** We continue to **Form** our **Faith** with the baptism of Kody Davis in March of 2025 and Confirmation classes after Church services. Taylor Schultz and Shaw Salo lead some Faith Formation classes for the little ones.
- **Fellowship:** The year has brought new faces into the Church and the Fellowship Hall. Friendly conversations and coffee time have made the new faces feel welcome and cared for in God's house. Highlights of the year include: Wednesday soup and sandwich suppers during Lent, Easter Breakfast, Joint Worship with Gethsemane on 5th Sundays, and a celebration meal and worship on St. Stephen's special 80th Anniversary in October of 2025.
- **Fortune Lake:** 701 campers attended this summer, an increase of 21% over 2024. The summer staff of 23 people included 6 people from 4 other countries. It was an incredible year for rentals and retreats and a new roof for Emanuel Lodge, paid for by generous donations.
- **Memorial Team:** Memorial funds were given in memory of **+Jim Voss+** and **+Sandy Baumler+**
- **Property Team:** Many members worked together during our spring cleanup in May. Electrical upgrades were completed in the Fall and the new A/V system installation was finished on December 12.
- **Social Ministry:** "God's Work, Our Hands" In August, our members purchased school supplies for School Kits. In September, 50 kits were assembled containing various needed school supplies. In October, the kits were loaded on a Boxcar and sent to Delaware, where they were sorted by Lutheran World Relief and shipped where they were needed around the globe. **Advent Service Project:** In December, members decorated our Angel Tree with tags for Rainbow House, a shelter who assists women escaping from abusive relationships. The congregation generously filled in under the tree with a large number of needed items. **Celebration Kits** were assembled containing everything needed to make a beautiful and delicious cake. The kits were delivered to the Peshtigo Food Pantry where they were very much appreciated.
- **Women of the ELCA:** WELCA had a good and productive year. Monthly meetings were held and attended by an average of 13 ladies. WELCA held a funeral luncheon for 2 members we lost in 2025. **+Jim Voss+** in April and **+Pat Kaczmarczyk+** in October. In March, Kodi Davis' baptism was celebrated with a cake. We honored Sam Salo's high school graduation with a nice lunch, cake and a present in May. The Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, and the 2 bathrooms received a facelift with a fresh coat of paint in August. In October, WELCA organized the banquet for our 80th Anniversary. To end the year on a happy note, the Angel Tree was decorated and gifts purchased for Rainbow House.
- **Worship/Music Team:** Worshipping **BRINGS** us and **BINDS** us together. Our worship services and music are best described as "full of diversity" and "ever-evolving". We learned the heart-wrenching story of how our ancestors treated our Native American neighbors while we listened to their cultural music. Carla Dutkavich showed us how graceful and flowing sign language can be and how it can add to the beauty of music. Worship is balanced when Pastor Brenda speaks of "Cup of Joy" and "Cup of Sorrow". It is the upbeat music of our final hymn as we leave the Church that we carry with us as we drive home.

8. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Bethesda Cemetery:	Disbursements = \$3,000.93	
	Income = \$5,828.27	EOY Balance: \$3,141.17
Joint Council Fund:	Total EOY balance of the Joint Fund is \$7,781.90	
	St. Stephen's behind by \$121.76.	
Memorial Fund:	Balance as of Jan. 1, 2025, \$4,451.65	
	Income = \$834.59	EOY Balance: \$5,286.24
Women of the ELCA:	Balance as of Jan. 1, 2025, \$1,351.58	
	Expenses \$459.61	EOY Balance \$891.97
Financial Secretary:	EOY 2024 balance \$47,153.74	
	EOY 2025 balance \$34,340.70	A Decrease of \$12,813.04
Cong. Treasurer:	Income for 2025 \$78,102.48	
	Expenses \$85,948.10	Deficit of \$7,845.62
Audit Certification:	Completed by John Starzynski, Keith Olson, Alvin Etelamaki and Sandy Chaney	
Motion to accept all Financial Reports: Sharon Etelamaki 2nd: Shirley Olson CARRIES		

9. NEW BUSINESS

2026 Proposed Budget: Alphabetic references along the left side of the page to aid in asking questions Question by Jane Christenson: Does the budget meet the Synod guideGines? CP John answered: Yes!

Motion to accept 2026 Budget: Bill Grundstrom 2nd: Angela Keyzers CARRIES

In regards to our **Congregational Council**, John Starzynski, Donna Thonne, Donna Tennessen, Kami Salo, and Cheri Leiphart will continue to serve for the 2026 Council year.

Nominating Committee: CP John asked for nominations for up to **4** new people to serve on the **Church Council**. No nominations were made. Pastor Dave Christenson volunteered to represent St. Stephen's at the **Northland Lutheran Retirement Community Annual Meeting**. Sean Bright and Kenzie Bright will be our delegates at **Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp**. No nominations were made for the **Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly** or for the **Menominee Valley Conference Meeting**.

Motion to accept ALL nominations: Sandy Chaney 2nd: Keith Olson CARRIES

10. CLOSING PRAYER and 11. ADJOURNMENT

Cheri led the congregation in the Closing Prayer. Meeting declared **closed** in the name of the **+Father** and of the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit, Amen**. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!

TIME: 12:00p

Learning Sign Language with Carla

