



Where we meet as God's People of Joy  
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# for all the SAINTS

Published by St. Stephen's Lutheran Church of Monona

Volume 15 - Issue 2  
FEBRUARY, 2012

.....  
INSIDE

.....

SOUP FOR SCHOOLS  
PAGE 4

LENT  
PAGE 6

FINANCE & COUNTING  
PAGE 7



## On Headlights

*I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular. So here we are with a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a taillight rather than as a headlight leading people to higher levels of justice.*

*There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days, the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.*

*If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning.*

These are passages from Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." The occasion was his arrest for nonviolent resistance, parading against segregation. White church leaders from the city criticized him and the movement, essentially saying that stirring up trouble is not how good Christians should act. The letter is Pastor King's reply to their complaint.

During this time of year and again around his death date (April 4), I spend some time reading MLK and refreshing myself in his thought. That we give him such attention

testifies to his role as a saint and martyr — an example and witness — in our faith.

These words also fit with an idea I'd been contemplating in recent weeks. It has been occurring to me (as it has to many others throughout history) that dim beacons don't attract much attention. Probably few people have ever joined a church or committed themselves to a "Christian" life because they saw how easy it was, that it didn't require them to change. Nowadays, especially, few are seeking to join another "social club."

Rather, it's more likely the radical lives that attract attention, bearing witness to our living Lord who is "authentic" and "relevant," showing how this faith changes individuals and this world. If MLK hadn't been arrested, harassed, and eventually killed for living out his belief, certainly we wouldn't remember him and honor his birthday with a national holiday (the only person thus recognized just for being a Christian).

This has been in my mind lately as I bicycle. It is a small response, certainly nothing the stature of MLK, but I try to bike even on these chilly and snowy winter days. Fresh air and exercise are side benefits, but the thing that really makes the difference is my faith. For me, that we are changing our planet's climate, that our actions are harming the well-being of God's creation, means a need to change. The status quo methods of

## *and Thermostats*

using up this planet, I believe, are not an option for people of faith. I have heard God's call to a more excellent way, and am pleased to respond. I'm pleased, even though it seems like an extreme position attracting strange attention.

You may protest, trying to evade such expectations with a caveat that Jesus loves you no matter what, that you could choose a life of ease and fit right in with the broader culture and not be rejected by God. I suspect that's true, but it does make me wonder what difference Jesus' love and God's mercy mean, then. Paul phrased it this way: "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?" (Romans 6:1-2)

As you take your faith seriously, as you notice the life of Christ taking on flesh in your life, I invite you to ponder what makes you different. The kingdom of God is present among us, reshaping the status quo. So where do you see that? How do you participate as a "thermostat" to change values? Where do you need to shine your light, pointing on to justice? What ways of life are no longer an option for you? In what suffering do you rejoice? What makes you an extremist?

In these things, blessed are you!

+nick

+ nick

## Help the Homeless at the Road Home

Our next evening to host families transitioning from homelessness is Thursday, Feb. 16, as we host The Road Home at Lake Edge UCC (on Buckeye Road). That evening, you have the chance to prepare and serve a meal, to spend evening time with families, and to be an overnight host.



## Holden Village

After adjusting our dates to avoid the Spanish-speaking week, we are all set to travel to Holden Village! The trip will be August 12 to 20. If you'd like to join the group, traveling by Amtrak to the remote mountains of Washington state for days of worship and learning and hiking and relaxation and wonder, you still have a chance! Talk to Pastor Nick by February 19. Total cost of the trip will be around \$750.

## Our Life Together



### Rain Barrels in the Year of Water

As Monona sets out to make 2012 the year of water, all of us can learn to use water a little bit better. If you do any watering on your garden or yard, this might be the year to consider a rain barrel. Rain barrels are large barrels that catch water from roof gutters when it is raining so it may be used later in your yard. The obvious benefit is that the water stored in the barrel saves other water from being used – potentially well over 100 gallons per month for each barrel during the growing season. Less obvious (but equally important) benefits include reduced run-off into your yard during a storm (less erosion and standing water), less run-off to the city sewer system, reduced peak demand for water utilities, and a lower water bill.

Installing a rain barrel is easy and inexpensive, and the St. Stephen's Green Team is working on a project to provide low cost rain barrels this spring for those who are interested. Please consider if this may be one way your family could help care for God's creation. Please fill out the short survey about water use on an upcoming Sunday, and watch for more information this spring.

### Prayer Vigil for Peace

Prayer Vigil for Peace meets Mon., Feb. 20, at 5:30 p.m. to reflect on and pray for peace.

### Soup for Schools

Several years ago, Cynthia Burnside suggested a program that would, first, provide scholarships for deserving and needy Palestinian students to attend the Lutheran schools, and, second, would give us an opportunity to get to know one another in an informal setting.

*Here's how Soup for Schools program works:* Groups of 8-12 people (couples, singles or a mixture), gather once a month (average) at a home or at church. The "host" usually serves a simple meal of soup, with other members bringing the remainder of the meal. Each person pays \$5.00 which is sent from St. Stephen's to school headquarters in Jerusalem. We also receive updates, including pictures of the various students we are helping.

Once a year there's an "all soup group" gathering to celebrate and learn a bit. That is also the chance to rotate groups. This year's "all soup group" gathering will be Sunday, May 20.

But you can join a group before then! Right now, there are five Soup Groups. If you would like to participate in this program, or would like more information about the Soup for Schools, please contact Pastor Nick.

This is truly a fun way to get to know people in our St. Stephen's community and make a huge difference.

— Joann Esser

## Our Life Together

### Women's Spiritual Formation

If you attended the Women's Retreat on Jan. 28, you are invited to "examine" the experience with the Women's Spiritual Formation group on Thursday, Feb. 9, at 4 p.m. in the church library. The Spiritual Formation group will be using the Examen prayer practice to reflect on the experiences of those who attended the retreat. No previous experience is necessary. Come and enjoy a time of friendship and reflection. We will also meet on Thursday, Feb. 23 at 4 p.m. For more info, please contact Nancy Morris at 298-7657.

### Crochet/Knit Ministry

The main group normally meets the 1st and 3rd Sundays from 1-3 p.m. with a drop-in group meeting the 1st and 3rd Friday from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Both groups meet in Fireside. For info, call Karen Baier (279-5648).

### Bold Cafe

Bold Café will not meet this month, due to the women's retreat held January 28th. A huge thank you to everyone who helped plan and who attended this event. If you have not returned your evaluation, please turn it into the church office as soon as possible.

### Women's Bible Study

To Follow and to Serve

Women's Bible Study meets the third Thursday at 1:00 p.m. in the library. The Gospel of Mark has opened our eyes to Jesus' ministry and the Disciples' ministry. Think of your own experiences with faith. What has been the most difficult thing asked of you? What does it mean to receive God's mercy and grace?

You are invited to join us each month for good conversations and tough questions.

### New Member Class

Interested in learning more about Lutheran Christianity and St. Stephen's or know others who might be? A new member class begins gathering on Sunday, Feb. 12 at 9:10 in the library.

### Men's Bible Study

Don't forget Men's Bible Study each month at Tully's II on Monona Drive. We meet at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 9.

# Our Life Together

## Lent



Lent is a season for focusing on our faith, for renewing our relationship with God. The four traditional disciplines for this renewal, this return to our baptismal calling, are repentance, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

This year, Lent begins on **February 22 with Ash Wednesday**, as we are marked with a solemn, smudged reminder that guides us toward God's grace.

A **devotional booklet** to guide your Bible reading and prayer will be available by Sun., Feb. 19. Thank you to all who wrote reflections and to Meg Nielsen for coordinating!

Throughout the season, we encourage you to join in **midweek worship on Wednesdays**. We will be discovering our faith through dialogues and reflections on the Jonah story. (You might read this brief book of the Bible to prepare.)

Sign-ups are now posted to help with simple **Soup Suppers**. At these meals together, you will have the chance to support our youth in their many faithful activities this summer — the ELCA National Youth Gathering, Lutherdale Bible Camp, and Boundary Waters canoeing.

Our **discussion book** this year is *Making Sense of the Cross*. Asking what the cross means for our lives, the book is set up as an opportunity to 'listen in' on an open conversation about the cross. It asks, what does the cross say about God? Did Jesus have to die? Copies are available for \$11.

We also invite you to continue contributing to the Poor Fund, supporting life-and-death work for Palestinians at **Augusta Victoria Hospital** in Jerusalem.

## African-American History Month

During February, we pay attention to diversity in our heritage, both in our country and in our faith. In addition to some learning opportunity, each Sunday at 8:00 and 10:00 worship we will sing and reflect on a hymn with some sort of African-American background, including texts by important African-American poets, favorites of Martin Luther King, and more.

## Trinity Class

Pastor Nick is going to watch a webcast class on the Trinity from one of his most engaging professors at Luther Seminary, Steve Paulson. The class is 7-9 on Mondays, Jan. 30 to Feb. 27. Are you interested in watching with him? Let him know ASAP. (You can also catch up on missed sessions.)

## Our Life Together

### Finance and Counting

One of the blessings of our ministry at St. Stephen's has been the willingness of a group of people who serve as counters. These counters spend time going through the offering and making note of every penny contributed through the Sunday offering and other monies that come in during the week. People in the congregation donate to a variety of funds within the congregation, from the General Fund and Building Fund, to memorials and specific offerings like "Mountain of Food" and the like. Monies are also contributed for events like the Women's Retreat, Holden Village Trip, and the Boundary Waters trip. People also help our Palestinian friends through the purchase of items at the olive wood store. Our congregation does a great job in supporting the wide variety of ministries. The difficult task is the counting of these monies. It is made even more difficult when you write one lump check for several purposes.

So, we are now asking for a little help. Would you write separate checks for the variety of different things you are giving? For example, write one check for your offering and another for building. You might write a check for the Palestinian crafts table or for Pastor Tim's CD's. This will make the task of the counters much more doable and contribute to an easier accounting on our part. Thank you for your help. And thank you to those who give of their time and talents to assist in this important part of our ministry. And thank you for your continued support of the many vital ministries of St. Stephen's!

### Volunteer Work Days at Lutherdale

Have you ever thought about finding a good place to volunteer your services? A new volunteer network is being established at Lutherdale and we are looking for a few individuals who would like to help with a variety of "fix-it" jobs around the camp. There will be three Major Work Days during the year: Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. Are you interested in being part of this new venture? Talk to Pastor Tim and see how you can help!



### Recently Hospitalized –

Gerald Arneson, Helen Chadwick, Gary Geil, Judy Benzine, Tom Moran, Patricia Carey, Wava Grinde, Bal Chandra Chauhan, Meg Nielsen, Esther Wardale

### New Mortgage Information

Original Balance (10/1/2010)	\$1,361,512
Interest Paid to Date	100,985
Principal Paid to Date	46,172
Remaining Balance	\$1,315,340



Sympathy – to those who mourn the death of Darrel “DJ” Thurow

### Preparing the Way

(thru 8th quarter – November 2009 thru October 2011)

Pledged to Date	\$ 285,386
Received to Date	\$ 258,686



### Baptism—

Hunter Thomas Rohs,  
son of Philip & Sara Rohs

*Please continue to pray for this child who has new life in Christ.*



Food Pantry Need – The Pantry is in need of the brown grocery bags .



### Birth Congrats –

Clayton Alan Semmens, son of Sarah & Jeff Semmens, born Dec. 30

### Wanted: Pampers Coupons!

If you have or get coupons for Pampers diapers and have no need of them yourself, Rebecca Redmann sure would like to get them from you. You can give them to her in person or leave them in her mailbox outside the church office. Thanks!

### Prayers for Deployed Military

Please keep in prayer the following people currently serving in the military:

Chris Hudson deployed to Kosovo

Greg Post deployed to Germany

If you know of others to add, please call the church office.

## With a Thankful Heart

- to Sally Foss for donating The Bible Story book set to the library
- to those who served as cantors in January: Karen Baier, Heide Powers, Stephen Redmann, Angela Heyworth and Karen Kordela
- Special thank you to Karen and Rylee Kordela for their willingness to spend time organizing and filing all the choir music!
- to the small, dedicated group – “the A-Team” as Shirley Worl says – for taking down decorations and getting the building cleaned up after Christmas
- to all who donated for the Sock and Mitten trees. The items were shared by Sunday school students with the Road Home, the Food Pantry, and Bethel Homeless Ministries
- to all who attended congregational forums, prepared and read annual reports, and participated in the Annual Meeting for St. Stephen’s and for the Foundation
- to all who care for the sick and grieving, the hungry and the imprisoned, and all as any has need
- to those who scrubbed the nursery
- to those who care for coffee
- to all who thought about “good gifts” during the holiday season, sharing fair trade items and other gifts that “give twice”
- to chaperones and drivers

*The following letter is from the regional representative for the Lutheran World Federation in Jerusalem which runs Augusta Victoria Hospital. The ‘Fund for the Poor’ is also the focus of our special Lenten almsgiving.*

Dear friends at St. Stephen’s,

Thank you for your generous donation in support of the Augusta Victoria Hospital’s ‘Fund for the Poor’. Your contribution makes it possible for the hospital to provide life-saving care to the most vulnerable people.

Our deepest sympathies are with your congregation and the South Central Wisconsin Synod as you remember the life and gifts of Cynthia Burnside. Cynthia’s work among Palestinian Christians is but one of the many testaments to her commitment to peace and justice for all of God’s children and she will be deeply missed. Please let us know if there are ways we can honor Cynthia here in Jerusalem.

There are many exciting updates at Augusta Victoria Hospital this year. Just a few short weeks ago, the hospital’s second medical linear accelerator began offering state-of-the-art radiation therapy for oncology patients, effectively doubling access of Palestinians to this life-saving treatment. Additionally, part of the first floor has been renovated for treatment of patients with solid tumors and construction is underway for a new bone marrow transplantation isolation unit on the second floor. These services are reaching the most needy patients coming from Gaza. Thanks to your contribution to the AVH ‘Fund for the Poor’, we can ensure that not only the treatment, but transportation, lodging and other psycho-social services are available for these patients. On behalf of Augusta Victoria Hospital and all the patients who will benefit from your support, thank you!

In God’s grace,  
Mark B. Brown



*"Then God said to Jonah, "What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?" Jonah said, "Plenty of right. It's made me angry enough to die!" God said, "What's this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can't I likewise change what I feel about Ninevah from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than a hundred and twenty thousand childlike people who don't yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?"*

*(Jonah 4:9-11, from "The Message")*

Dear Sainly Brothers and Sisters,

During the season of Lent we will be spending time with the book of Jonah. It is a good book because it is a good story. Everyone loves a good story. One of the signs of a good story is how you discover yourself within the story, whether in the telling itself, or later, after you have had time to think about it a little.

The story of Jonah is known most of all because of the part where Jonah gets swallowed by a "whale." It's fantastic excitement tells of a struggle between a reluctant proph-

et of God and how God uses even Jonah's reluctance to bring good news to the people of Ninevah. The story contains lots of fun action, including the running away of Jonah from the task God calls him to do, to the storm at sea, the swallowing by the whale and subsequent vomiting up of Jonah, to the prophecy to and repentance by the Ninevites, and finally Jonah's unwillingness to understand the good news of God's changing God's mind. But what really makes this a great story is that Jonah isn't necessarily such a good and perfect child of God. In fact, Jonah is quite a comic bungler – imperfect and sinful. Yet, God still uses this imperfect and inept prophet to bring good news to the Ninevites. They heard this news and repented. They saw God's grace at work and chose to follow Yahweh, rather than themselves. They turned towards God.

We are going to spend time wrestling with Jonah during the season of Lent and in the process wrestle with ourselves and we hope to learn how God works with people even like ourselves. You see, this is how we relate to Jonah. We often think that we are not like all of the heroes of our faith. We don't live up to the expectations that God has for us-from the waters of our baptism until now. And yet, we are promised that God does not give up on us. God continues to call us back into the relationship for which we were created. God calls us back, to come home, again and again. But God does not leave us at home for long. God sends us out to others who need to hear of his love. God sends us out to our

*of a Tale!"*

family and friends, to neighbors and co-workers, to classmates and even enemies with the message of a loving and active God who wants us to turn around from living with our own desires at the center of our heart to living out of a God-centered heart. As we discover from Jonah, this is not a one-time thing. This calling is continual. It is an everyday calling.

Martin Luther responds to his own question about the significance of Baptism in his small catechism by saying this, *"It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever."* St. Paul writes in Romans 6: *"We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*

So as we wander off in our own lives, whether by trying to avoid our callings or simply choosing to live for ourselves, God continues to stand by us and God keeps working on us so that daily we see the goodness and love that God has for all of creation. This is the power of the Jonah story.

As we meet weekly on Lenten Wednesdays to hear parts of this story read, we will have an opportunity to reflect on our connection with the bigger picture of this particular story and how we fit into it. We hope that you will come and participate as you are able and hear again the powerful word of God's love for God's creation.

Beginning Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22, come for some soup around 5:30. The youth who are going to camp this summer, or on a summer trip will be serving this year. Come and support their efforts! Stay for worship at 6:45 or worship at noon. You won't be disappointed! It is, after all, a whale of a tale!

God's peace be with you!



Pastor Tim

## Your Pastors are Off to Jail!

Pastor Nick and Pastor Tim are being hauled off to jail on Thursday March 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:00 am. They are in need of bail money! The Muscular Dystrophy Association is conducting a 2012 Monona Lock-Up and Nick and Tim are participating to help raise funds and awareness for MDA. We are looking for "bail money!" If you are willing and able to help, you are welcome to sign our forms at church or go online to participate. Please help us so that we can get out of jail and work on sermons, visit the sick, or just have some coffee in the church office! Thanks for your help!

*Tim and Nick*

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
5700 Pheasant Hill Road  
Monona, Wisconsin 53716-3198

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(wheelchair accessible)  
**CHURCH OFFICE**  
Phone (608) 222-1241  
Fax (608) 222-2005  
www.StStephensMonona.com  
office@ststlc.net  
tim@ststlc.net  
nick@ststlc.net  
edward@ststlc.net  
music@ststlc.net  
karl@ststlc.net  
alex@ststlc.net  
ststpantry@netscape.net

**STAFF**  
Tim Hansen, Senior Pastor  
Nicholas Utphall, Associate Pastor  
Rebecca Redmann, Dir. of Music Ministries  
Edward Johnson, Senior Visitation Ministries  
Jane Voss, Church Secretary  
Karl Cinlar, Custodian  
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Judy Benzine, Food Pantry  
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