

Martyr Monthly

December 2023



**WORSHIP AT SSM
SATURDAY AT 5:00PM
SUNDAY AT 9:30AM***

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30AM

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP TIMES

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24TH 4:00PM AND 9:00PM*

CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25TH 9:30AM*

***(NO WORSHIP SERVICES ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23RD AT 5:00PM
OR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH AT 9:30AM)***

****INDICATES WORSHIP SERVICES STREAMED ON ZOOM,
FOR ZOOM INFORMATION PLEASE***

Pastor's Page



Dear SSM Faith Community,

As we turn the calendar to December, we begin a new church season called Advent. As the days grow shorter, animals hibernate, and plants go dormant, the readings during the first week of Advent invite us to wake up, to be watchful and vigilant. Christ is coming at a time we do not expect.

With so much that causes us to despair, we need this season that invites us to look with eager longing for signs of hope breaking into our world. This change of heart is a kind of repentance that prepares us to receive Christ anew this holy season.

As we begin this new season we will begin Year C of the lectionary. Our gospel readings will predominantly be from the gospel of Mark for the coming year.

Though Christmas decorations are starting to appear everywhere, our worship space will be decked in blue, the Advent color for hope. The bare branches in the worship space mirror the wintry landscape. During these cold, dark days we turn inward, and prepare ourselves to welcome Christ, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

It is a time for new beginnings. It is time for a change. We begin a new year of grace this Advent.

Peace, Pastor Brian

Newcomer Orientation



Are you a newcomer to St. Stephen the Martyr? If you would like to find out more, get connected, deepen your ties, or if you are considering membership, please join us following the 9:30am worship service on Sunday, December 10 for a newcomer orientation. Please email Pastor Brian Hooper (pastorbrianhooper@gmail.com) with any questions, or if you plan to attend.

From the President

Annual



Meeting

The annual meeting of the congregation will be Sunday, January 28, 2024, beginning at 10:40 am. Members are encouraged to attend in-person or online for this important meeting. Tentative agenda topics include: approval of the 2024 budget, purchase of a new sound system, changes to the Mission Endowment Fund structure, and becoming a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation. A budget preview meeting will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at 10:40 am. Watch your mail and email in early January for additional information, the 2023 annual report, and a final agenda.

Our Advent Wreath

Advent, which begins the Church's liturgical year, begins on Sunday, December 3. Advent encompasses the four Sundays and weekdays leading up to the celebration of Christmas.



The Advent season is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds for the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. The Advent Wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. The wreath itself, which is made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God and the everlasting life we find in Christ. The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent and the coming of the Light of Christ into our lives. One candle is lit each weekend.



A Year in Pictures



January 8th - Christmas Season

March 8 - Holden Evening Prayer



April 1 - Easter Egg Hunt
&
April 2- Happy Birthday 90+



Summer Choir -June 25 & VBS - June 28





July 17 - Quilting Bee



September 9 - Garage
Clean Up Crew



October 7 - Blessing of the Animals



November 5 - All Saints Day



Martyr Monthly—St. Stephen the Martyr

Christmas Giving



ELCA Good Gifts – If you are looking for the perfect way to give a gift to someone who has everything or if you want to

share the joy of the season, consider purchasing an ornament from the ELCA Good Gifts display in the Narthex. Purchase an ornament by putting your cash or check into the envelope provided, be sure to add your name and the amount on the outside of the envelope. Then either take the ornament home for your own tree, send it to someone as a gift or hang it on our little Good Gifts tree at the display. Ornaments are priced from \$10 for chicks to \$150 for a Latrine and anywhere in between.



Women of the ELCA at SSM Cookie/Candy Sale

The Women of SSM are asking each family to bake and bring in a batch of their favorite cookies or candy (bars that are pre-cut are fine). Sweets will be repackaged into variety boxes of 1 pound each. Each box will include some bonus candy and goodies. Boxes will sell for \$9.00 each.

Please bring your goodies to church on Friday, December 8th between 9am and noon or on Saturday, December 9th between 9am and 10am.

Cookies will be ready for sale before and after worship services on Saturday, December 9th (5:00pm) and Sunday, December 10th (9:30am).

All funds raised will go to local and worldwide charities to be determined in January.

Loose Ends Lunch

The December Loose Ends Lunch will be held on December 13th at noon at First Watch, located at 5320 S 76th Street. Please contact Karen Hoffman to let her know that you plan to attend.





December Birthdays

Rae Gifford	01
Quinn Schuchardt	02
John Muroi	05
Faith O'Connell	08
Thomas Raasch	10
Karen Palasz	11
Marge Muroi	11
Bonnie Court	13
Joe Lewandowski	15
Russ Mayer	16
Jennifer Ortega	16
Dolores Dowling	17
Regan Kunesh	17
Shirley Rau	18
Breleigh Kopplin	19
Charlotte Knipple	21
Bonnie Daleness	22
JoAnn Soderstrom	23
Larry Stasiewski	26
Paul Heins	27
Larry Petricek	29
Abigale Hanna	29
Dan Davies	30
Lillian Mildren	31

Advent and Christmas Nativity Displays


During the November and December, we will be displaying **Nativities from Around the World** in our fellowship hall. Tables will be set up for display around the perimeter of our fellowship hall for your nativity scene to be displayed. Nativity scenes can be brought to church mid-November and picked up after (or before) our **Advent/Christmas Concert** on December 17. Don't forget to label your set so that it finds its way home again after the display.



D e c e m b e r 2023

1st Weekend of Advent		
Saturday, 12/2	5:00pm	Worship
	6:00pm	Youth Gathering Planning Session
Sunday, 12/3	9:30am	Worship*
		Sunday School
	10:45am	Meru Trip Presentation
	11:00am	Youth Movie and PJ Party - until 2:00pm
Monday, 12/4	1:00pm	Bible Study
Tuesday, 12/5	6:30pm	Mega Meeting
Wednesday, 12/6	9:30am	Men's Bible Study
	5:45pm	Handbell Rehearsal
	7:00pm	Choir Rehearsal
Thursday, 12/7	6:30pm	Confirmation Class
2nd Weekend of Advent		
Saturday, 12/9	5:00pm	Worship
Sunday, 12/10	9:30am	Worship*
		Sunday School
	10:45am	Newcomer Orientation
Tuesday, 12/12	6:30pm	Council Meeting
Wednesday, 12/13	10:15am	Women's Bible Study
	5:45pm	Handbell Rehearsal
	7:00pm	Choir Rehearsal
3rd Weekend of Advent		
Saturday, 12/16	5:00pm	Worship
Sunday, 12/17	9:30am	Worship* - Advent./Christmas Concert
	10:45am	Coffee Hour with Children's Activities



Wednesday, 12/20	9:30am	Men's Bible Study
	5:45pm	Handbell Rehearsal
	7:00pm	Choir Rehearsal
Thursday, 12/21	6:30pm	Confirmation Class
Christmas		
Sunday, 12/24 Christmas Eve	4:00pm	Worship
	9:00pm	Worship*
Monday, 12/25 Christmas Day	9:30am	Worship *
		
1st Weekend after Christmas		
Saturday, 12/30	5:00pm	Worship - Lessons and Carols
Sunday, 12/31	9:30am	Worship* - Lessons and Carols
		Sunday School
Monday, 1/1	New Year's Day - Office Closed	
* Indicates worship services that are streamed on zoom		



Music and Worship

The Advent Christmas Concert will be Sunday, December 17 during the 9:30AM service. Sunday School, Choir, and Handbells will participate.

Christmas Eve services will be at 4:00PM and 9:00PM. Christmas Day service will be at 9:30AM.





Supporting Families • Growing Futures • Changing Lives™



Christmas Traditions



Sampler – 6 pack
(Butter Pecan, Choc. Rasp., Regular, French Vanilla, Hazelnut, Peaberry)



Sampler – 4 pack
(Regular, Decaf, Peaberry, Christmas Traditions)

Mt. Meru **Christmas Traditions** coffee blend combines 100% Mt. Meru premium Arabica coffee beans, enhanced with the rich flavors of cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla, with a hint of chocolate and other selected spices. Christmas Traditions is the perfect seasonal coffee for drinking with friends and family, and when it's brewing you can't help but think of Christmas. Why not make Christmas Traditions part of your Christmas tradition! This is available in 12 oz. bags of drip or whole bean and sells for \$18.

New this year is a special **Four-Pack Holiday Sampler** assortment of all drip grinds that sells for \$15.

A holiday favorite is the **Holiday Sampler Six-Pack** assortment of flavors that sells for \$20.

Any of these flavorful coffees would make wonderful Christmas or hostess gifts. Please contact me at 414-403-0509 for special orders.

Thank you! Shelly Rosenstock



Meru Trip Reflections

You are invited to join our Meru travelers on **December 3**, after worship as they share highlights, reflections and photos from their trip this fall. We will gather in the Fellowship Hall and hope to have a Zoom connection so all will have an opportunity to hear about the trip.

Highlights include incredible welcome, hospitality and gratitude for visitors. A focus on solving challenges vs seeing problems and observations on growth since the visit in 2019.

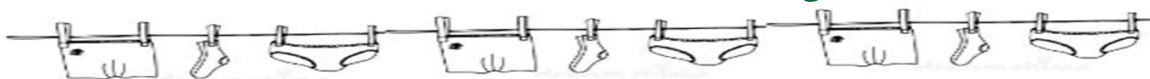
If you want to see more information on the Greater Milwaukee Synod Partnership with the Diocese of Meru go to the website, <https://www.partnerswithmeru.org/> and follow the *Partners with Meru (Tanzania, Africa)* Facebook page.

December 3, 10:45-11:30, Fellowship Hall – Meru Trip Reflections





Youth and Family



Last year our SSM congregation & youth made a TOWER OF FOOD for local food pantries, totaling over 500 pounds! This year we are hoping to overflow a laundry basket with **SOCKS & UN-DIES!**



Unity Lutheran Church is looking for donations of *men's and women's socks and underwear of all sizes (long underwear too!)*. Donations can be placed in the white laundry basket under the coat racks by the restrooms. Let's make a HUGE pile of undies SSM!!

Human Concerns



Bay View Coat Collection continues through December. **Clean, gently-used coats** of any size can be placed in the designated area across from the restrooms.

Food Pantries - Human Concerns has recently received exciting news that Faith Santa Fe, another one of our partner congregations, has reopened their food pantry for the first time since before the pandemic. Faith Santa Fe is located at 1000 S Layton Blvd. and serves Milwaukee's Southside. They will be added to our food pantry rotation beginning with the December food collection.



2024 New Orleans Youth Gathering



There will be a team building and planning event on December 2 at 6pm. There is still time to register for the gathering that will take place July 16-20. Reach out to Pastor Brian with any questions.

Stewardship

As we enter the Christmas Season and the New Year approaches, I'm reminded of an article I read by Marcia Shetler that I would like to share with you.

Many of us might feel like we are on a continuous quest to live more simply. For decades, we have created tools and technology with the goal of making our lives easier. Today, some efforts to live simply try to counter our complex, consumer-focused lifestyle: growing and eating simpler food from personal gardens, building micro-sized living quarters, and looking for ways to reduce our carbon footprints. Even so, naming that we are on this quest says something about our day-to-day lives of privilege. Our jobs, relationships, and social activities are often demanding. Simply finding rest is a luxury: Sabbath rest seems like an impossibility. Our efforts to do, be, and have the best leave us tired and unsatisfied. If there is a simple life, where is it? Paul's words in Philippians give us an important clue: "I have learned to be content with whatever I have." (Phil. 4:11) That kind of contentment is countercultural and not easily embraced by our human nature. Perhaps we can take comfort that even for Paul, finding contentment was learned behavior.

Paul's contentment came from his life in Christ. One of the simplest—and at the same time most comprehensive—descriptions of Christian stewardship is that it is "everything we do after we say we believe." I Timothy 6:18-19: "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." Living more simply involves reclaiming Christian discipleship as our priority, including stewarding our resources faithfully and giving generously. It is my hope, and the hope of the Stewardship Team, that our congregation lets go of the excess clutter and takes hold of the life that is truly life, ready to receive and give all that God has in store for you and our ministry here at St. Stephen the Martyr.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year,
The Stewardship Team

Martyr Monthly—St. Stephen the Martyr



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Council Minutes, Nov. 4, 2023

Present: D Sanders; Pastor Hooper; J Muroi; E Sanders; B Zimmermann; J Miller; S Rosenstock; L Schuchardt; A Dollar; K Zimmermann; S Wesolowski; J Hanna.

Meeting was preceded by the Council Retreat

Meeting called to order by at 11:08 am by Denise Sanders.



Financial

J. Muroi – Organ Loan is paid off; we have an increase in the phone tower lease amount; the upper parking lot contract is signed and will be honored next year if they cannot start this year; J. Muroi is already following the best practices laid out by the ELCA.

J. Miller – the giving letter is going out as of October 31; envelopes will be prepared so that they are available before January; pledge cards are going to J. Miller

Pastor's Time

We are celebrating faith milestones- handing out Bibles in third grade, first communions, and confirmations.

Annual meeting will be held January 28 after church. All annual reports should be sent to the office by December 12. Arganda items include: Sound System Proposals; RIC Welcome Statement; Mission Endowment Fund management proposal.

Budget – Eric will have the current figures to the committee heads for their verification and proposals.

Committee Updates

Christian Ed – Bible Studies are preceding, confirmation is meeting,



Sunday School is proceeding, and VBS will be looking for someone to organize as Patti Nelson has said she will not continue, we will need a new Christian Ed head when Bonnie's term is completed.

Worship and Music – November 12 is the organ recital at 4:00pm

Fellowship -Pet blessing was successful and reached out to the community.

Council Minutes Continued



Youth and Family – Trunk or treat was successful. There were community people present and Alex Dollar received positive feed back about the event. They are planning an Advent event and an Easter Egg hunt.

Human Concerns- Faith/Santa Fe food pantry is back. The Unity Meals are resuming and need help for the Thanksgiving meal. 60% of the Thanksgiving offering will be given to Hunger Task Force.

Finance – Budget materials are going out to the committee heads. Final requests should be returned to Eric.

Executive Committee will meet at 6:30pm during the mega meeting on Tuesday November 7th.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:40.

Pastor Brian closed with prayer.



Wild Church

The Wild Church Nature Spirituality network is inviting you and your friends to a unique event on the Day of Solstice, December 21 at 3:30 pm. Pastor Stu Merkel and Faith Community Church in Franklin, WI, will be hosting this event, which will take place just south of Southridge Mall at 7700 W Faith Drive, just off of 76th Street. The theme, "**Jesus is the one who brings light to the darkness**" will be discussed in an interactive sermon. Activities will include building a nature altar, lighting a bonfire. Worship will include scripture and Celtic readings, communion, singing and praying until the sun sets. Stay afterwards for refreshments and fellowship. If the weather does not cooperate worship will take place in the Faith Community Church Chapel. Find out more about the Wild Church Network at www.wildchurchnetwork.com.



OFFICE HOURS

9:00-2:00 M-Th

9:00-12:00 F

SSM STAFF

Brian Hooper, Pastor

pastorbrianhooper@gmail.com

Tabatha Moldenhauer, Music Director

Mark Breutzmann, Saturday Musician

Jim Hennessy, Church Maintenance

Bonnie Zimmermann, Ministry Assistant

SSM Website: www.ssmelca.org

Email: office@ssmelca.org

Phone: 414-421-3543

Sunday School email:

sundayschool@ssmelca.org

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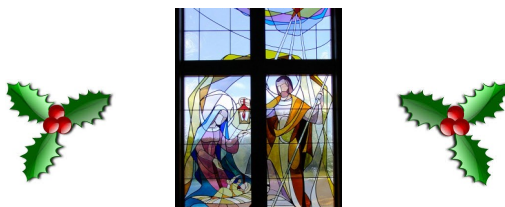
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CHURCH OFFICE)***

St Stephen the Martyr ELCA

6101 S. 51st Street
Greendale WI 53129
(414) 421-3543



December 2023



Welcoming all, Worshiping God, Serving others