

News, Notes, and Prayers

from St. Stephen Lutheran Church

January 2024

Who We Are

St. Stephen Lutheran Church is God's people in The Plainfields, Piscataway, and Edison.

Staff

Pastor Frantisek Janak pastor@ststephenspnj.org
Jeanne Elmuccio, office secretary secretary@ststephenspnj.org
James Horan, director of music

Congregational Council

Trecia Benjamin
Bill Cochran
Peggy Flannery
Randy Gerling
Frank Gianneschi
Effil Hemmings
Donna Hussey
Patricia Klatt
Bob Merring
Eloise Newton
Rich Newton Jr.
Audrey Oddman
Mary Lynn Yuschik

Office

3145 Park Ave., South Plainfield, NJ 07080
908-757-4474

What's Happening

Monday, January 1 – New Year's Day

Sundays, January 7. 14. 21. 28
10:30 a.m. + Worship with Holy Communion

Tuesday, January 16
7:30 p.m. Council Meeting

Wednesday, January 17
5:00 p.m. + St. Stephen's Pop-Up Food Pantry

Sunday, January 28 – Annual Congregational Meeting
11:30 a.m. + Following the worship service



St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

3145 Park Avenue
South Plainfield, New Jersey 07080
908-757-4474

Address Correction Requested

Pastor's Letter



Beloved community,

Depending on when you read this, it might be right before Christmas or during Christmas time.

Either way, allow me to wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! While most of the society ends Christmas festivities on December 25th, our celebrations continue! Advent is zipping by, there may be fewer presents under the tree, and perhaps there will be an empty space, where somebody sat last year for one reason or another – in short,

Christmas time may not be all joy and sprinkles for you but allow me to assure you that is a part of the season as well. A long time ago, Jesus was also born into a world that had its joys and celebrations, but also trials and moments of grief. Mary and Joseph surely welcomed Jesus joyfully into the world, but at the same time, uncertainty and questions were at the back of their minds.

The church will be soon decorated similarly to the last year (as pictured) and we will continue to proclaim the joy and hope of Jesus Christ's birth. However, we are invited to participate in the festivities as we are – there is no need to pretend all is well if it is not!

If you read this prior to Christmas, please consider accepting my invitation to our Christmas Eve worship on December 24th at 4:30pm – in person and online on Facebook. Come as you are – joyfully, reluctantly, or somewhere in between!

Blessings,

The Rev. František Janák

Pastor

Pastor's Schedule: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays

(Emergency pastoral care as needed: please text or call at 331-248-3084)

Schedule a meeting or visit with Pastor František:

<https://bit.ly/schedule-with-rev-janak>

Pastor Frantisek will be away in Colorado with family,

December 27 – January 3.



Please rest assured that pastors, bishops, deacons, or other church leaders do not ask for funds via gift cards, we have budgets and designated funds for that. So, if you have received a message from someone claiming to be the Pastor and requesting gift cards for charitable purposes, please disregard.



Christmas Day A Service of Lessons and Carols

A worship service of Lessons and Carols will be posted to the New Jersey [Synod YouTube page](#) on Christmas Day.

It will be available at <https://bit.ly/NJsynod-yt>.

New Year's Greetings from the Discipleship Committee!

I said to a man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God:

That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

—M. L. Haskins



Thanks to all who pledged for 2024! The end of year total is \$113,752.

New Year's Plans

Are you planning to make New Year's resolutions this year? Do you usually? I would imagine that most people, even if they don't make formal resolutions, do at least a little thinking about the year to come, what it might hold, and how we might best meet it. The Discipleship Committee has a suggestion for how to approach this activity.



Instead of an activity that may be overly specific (I will lose 10 pounds by summer), or an idea that is so vague that it is really useless (I will be a better person this year), may we recommend a **“Word of Intention.”** This would be a quality that, with the help of God, you will use as a focus for your year.

First, think of some qualities that might be worthy of special thought and intention next year. What are some things you could use God's help with to work on? Some suggestions might be

— Love, patience, compassion, peace, courage, kindness

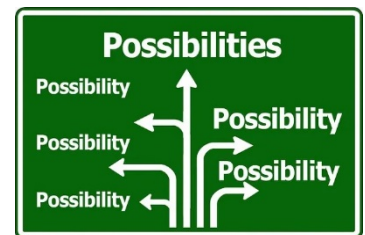
Or even something like

— Listen!

Or

— Judgement-NOT!

Make a short **list of possibilities** of interest to you that you might want to seriously consider. Sit with the list for a while until one thing makes itself known as the right one.



Then make every attempt to **live with that word every day**. Write it on a sticky note and place it where you will see it when you might need reminding - ie. your bathroom mirror, your computer, where you keep your car keys, where you sit for your daily devotions, etc.

During the year, then, the Discipleship Committee will give little reminders. Pray about it and see if it might be a helpful way for you to approach the New Year.

Thank you to all those who helped with and supported the wreath making event.

Enjoy your greens, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Jane & Craig Busch



Wesley Methodist Church

invites you and your congregation
to join us for a Night of Worship on December 17th.
Doors will open at 6:30 for fellowship and refreshments
with a Worship Service following.

We hope you can join us as a Community of faith.





From the Treasurer

	General Fund Income	Budget Expenses	Over/Short
January – September	112,847.35	112,454.64	392.71
October	13,102.00	14,317.41	(1,215.42)
November	13,786.62	15,535.48	(1,748.86)
YTD	139,735.97	142,307.53	(2,571.56)



POP-UP PANTRY



Thanks to all who donated this month.

Suggestions to donate for this month are:

- Pasta Sauce
- Soup
- Cookie mix
- Cake mix



We thank everyone for their continued support.

Judy Ziccardi



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
TO GO OVER THE REPORTS
FROM 2023

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

FOLLOWING THE WORSHIP
SERVICE

SEE YOU THERE!

Social Ministry Committee

The Social Ministry Committee would like to thank all who contributed gifts for those less fortunate in South Plainfield this Christmas season. We were able to give each of the children 3 gifts, each of the 4 families 2 gift cards and a quilt that our previous quilting group had made. It is a joy and a blessing to be able to share God's love with others.



Thank you also to all who provided refreshments after church this Fall. A new signup sheet for January – June 2024 is posted in the narthex.



New Jersey Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Join the Anti Racism Team to watch the film, "American Son" on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

January 15, 2024

We will watch the film together via a Netflix watch party beginning at 6:30pm, the discussion will begin at 8:00pm.

[Register here](#) and you will receive further information regarding how to access zoom and the watch party. **Please register early!**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYuf-Gsrz4iGN08jeMigiKUTQwD3ewyrk0-#/registration>

If you have questions email Rev. Sara Lilja at slilja@njsynod.org

NJ WELCA

"Women of The Bible" on December 20th at 7 p.m.

This month's topic is Elizabeth.



Zoom Link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88287549068?pwd=eHVuV2R2RnQzdTVQK2VPUEIzcFFFQT09>

Passcode 36912

Christmas Has Been Cancelled in Bethlehem

This article & video was shared with us by Pastor Carol Lindsay who has been visiting St. Stephen's recently:

Lutheran Church in Bethlehem has canceled Christmas due to the Israel-Hamas War

(Christmas Lutheran Church of Bethlehem is located in the West Bank of Palestine.)

Here is the link to the article:

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/palestine-israel/2023/12/07/baby-jesus-lies-amid-rubble-in-bethlehem-church-christmas-nativity-scene/>

Here is the link to the video version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYZHltQcvxU>




The words of our famous Carols ring hollow this year for those in the birthplace of our Lord. Let us pray for them and all who suffer the ravages of war this Christmas.

Let us also work to bring the justice of God to those who are oppressed.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

January 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Jan 1, 24	2	3 10:00am ACC recording	4	5 5:00pm ACC	6 10:00am IESDAC
7 10:30am Worship with Holy Communion 5:00pm ACC	8	9	10 10:00am ACC recording	11	12 5:00pm ACC	13 10:00am IESDAC
14 10:30am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Newsletter Items Due 5:00pm ACC	15	16 7:30pm Congregation Council Meeting	17 10:00am ACC recording 5:00pm Pop-Up Food Pantry 	18	19 5:00pm ACC	20 10:00am IESDAC
21 10:30am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Newsletter distributed 5:00pm ACC	22	23	24 10:00am ACC recording	25	26 5:00pm ACC	27 10:00am IESDAC
28 10:30am Worship with Holy Communion 11:30am Coffee and Refreshments 11:30am Congregational 5:00pm ACC	29	30	31 10:00am ACC recording			

