



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



ANNUAL REPORT

2019





A message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

Dear friends in Christ,

Stepping out in faith can be difficult. Martin Luther did it in 1517. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America did it at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. This church can be bold and daring because of our scriptural and Lutheran confessional understandings. Is it easy?

No. Do we always get it right? Probably not. Where we are in error, may God correct us.

The cross is our center. Faith, grace and Scripture alone are our guides. We are church. We are compelled by the gospel and our understanding that in Christ we have been set free to love and serve the neighbor. This loving and serving of our neighbor alongside courageous and faithful leaders is what offers hope to congregations.

Over the past 18 months we have made significant strides in our work on congregational vitality. This church has multiplied its efforts and leveraged its resources to enhance vitality in congregations. Our vision continues to evolve around strengthening our relationships with God, each other and the neighbors we serve. In this way we are addressing both local and global issues by being present in our own community and proactive with issues in the broader church.

This presence is made possible in significant ways through your giving of time, talents and financial resources to our work together. The success of our recent campaign, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, reflects the increasing

support for existing and new ministries that serve our communities here at home and others around the globe. Through regular, special and legacy gifts, \$250 million was given to support God's work. Through the spiritual practice of giving, we both acknowledge receiving God's gifts and share in God's generosity by passing on a portion to others. Together we are doing God's work in ways that we could not do otherwise.

As your congregation plans work for the coming year, I hope you will be both bold and daring, remembering God provides and desires abundant life for all. May you continue supporting God's work together with a spirit of solidarity, collaboration and generosity. We are all partners in the gospel, believing in Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.

Stepping out in faith together,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" —2 Corinthians 5:17



proclaiming and serving Jesus Christ



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Bishop Jon V. Anderson

Shetek Lutheran Ministries
Director Marvin Nysetvold

ELCA Global Mission Partner
Evangelical Lutheran Church
In South Africa

Bishop Phemba Buthelezi

SMSU Lutheran Campus Ministry
Jeff Greathouse, Campus Minister

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Executive Committee in 2019

- Daren Kesteloot – President
- Jasmine Steffen—Vice President
- Kirk Grannes – Treasurer
- Paula Petersen-Giles – Secretary

At-Large Council Members in 2019

- Josh Allerson
- Michelle Castor
- Bart Johnson
- Abby Dubs

STAFF

- Rev. Lyle Snyder, Lead Pastor
- Seth Boerboom, Parish Associate
- Angie Stacken, Office Manager
- Lauren Winn, Financial Assistant
- Melinda Grohs, Preschool Director
- Lisa Rosenboom, Preschool Assist. Teacher
- Melissa Doose, Preschool Assist. Teacher
- Judy DeCramer , Organist
- Mary Hauschild, Organist
- Gunvar Dombek , Organist & Pianist
- Seth Boerboom, Pianist
- Judy Hoeft , Pianist

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**CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING
St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Marshall, Minnesota**

**Sunday, January 19, 2020
9:35 a.m.**

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Reports
 - A. President’s Report
 - B. Pastors’ Report
 - C. Treasurer’s Report
5. Business
 - A. Election of Council Member
(Bill Cowden, Jennifer Marty, Erin Kuehl, and Carlton Johnson have all indicated an interest in serving on the council).
 - B. Approval of 2020 Budget
 - C. Christ-United/St. Stephen Merger
6. Closing Prayer and Adjournment

Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 20, 2019 9:35am
Meeting Minutes

Copies of the 2018 Annual Report available for all attendees

Church Council President Kitty Mercie called the meeting to order at 9:35am

Opening Prayer: Pastor Lyle Snyder

Approval of the Agenda: Attendees reviewed the agenda. Motion made by Brenda Citrowske to approve the agenda, Darrell Mercie seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

President's Report: Kitty Mercie

Approve of the last Congregational Meeting Minutes: Annual Meeting Minutes from January 21, 2018 were available for attendees. Motion made by Bart Johnson to approve the 2018 Congregational Meeting Minutes, John DeCramer seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Treasurer's Report: Council Treasurer, Kirk Grannes, reviewed key points out of the annual report

- Giving was \$30,824 down from 2017: 2017 giving was \$366,067 and 2018 giving was \$335,243
- Expenses for 2018 included \$33,000 for the parking lot and projector expenses, which had giving separate tracking
- Recommend to reduce these items to a \$0.00 budget for 2019, a \$8,400 reduction in budget:
 - ◇ ELCA Mission Support
 - ◇ Campus Support
 - ◇ Bible Camp Ministry
 - ◇ Lutheran Social Services
- One budget mis-printed was clarified, page # 37 in the Annual report in the Education section, Sunday School should be a 2018 budget of \$300, not \$3000
- Motion made by Frank Bielinski to approve the treasurer's report as printed, with notation of the mis-print clarified; Kevin Dubbs seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Preschool Director's Update: Melinda Grohns, Preschool Director

- Currently have 15 in the 3-year old class and 9 in the 4-year old class. Ideal numbers would be 15 in each class.
- Melissa Doose has joined as a Preschool Assist. Teacher
- Lisa Rosenboom is continuing as a Preschool Assist. Teacher

Election of new Council Members:

- Darren Kesteloot – President
- Jasmine Steffens - Vice President (new to council in 2019)
- Kirk Grannes – Treasurer
- Paula Giles – Secretary (new to council in 2019)
- Josh Allerson – At-Large (new to council in 2019)
- Bart Johnson – At-Large
- Michelle Castor – At-Large
- Abby Dubbs – Youth, At-Large (new to council in 2019)
- Motion made by Tracy Zahnow to approve the newly elected council members and executive positions; John DeCramer seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Motion made by Brenda Citrowske to adjourn the Annual Congregational Meeting; Cody Kesteloot seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Closing by Pastor Lyle Snyder

Report of the Congregation President

St. Stephen continues to grow. We welcomed 56 new members, had 27 baptisms and confirmed 20. God has blessed this congregation.

We were able to fix our parking lot for the 2nd time! We also installed new parking lot lighting, making the church facility much safer during the evenings.

We have the sanctuary screen & projector up and running. Much thanks John DeCramer for all of his hard work!

We will vote on new council members as Kirk Grannes, Michelle Castor, and Bart Johnson will be completing their terms. Members remaining are Josh Allerson, Abby Dubs, Paula Giles, Jasmine Steffen, and myself. With the addition of new council members (Bill Cowden, Jennifer Marty, Carlton Johnson, and Erin Kuehl), St. Stephen will be in very capable hands.

2020 is looking to be an exciting year, with the potential merger with Christ-United Presbyterian Church. The future is looking bright for St. Stephen!

As always we welcome your comments, concerns and questions. We thank you all for attending the annual meeting.

Well that's all for now! Keep up the faith, and God Bless your New Year!



Daren Kesteloot
Council President

Pastor's Report

"But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

Isaiah 41:8-10

So we've come a long ways in a little over four years together. Since October 1st, 2015, 270 people have joined in the life of the congregation through baptisms, transfers, & joining. Many have also been transferred, removed, or moved in that same time, but I want that number to sink for a minute. Many ELCA congregations don't even have a membership over 270 people - and that's the amount of new folks that have come in through our doors to be a part of our life together.

Now, the life of the church is not about numbers. Many people will judge success by size. How many people can you gather together under one roof? If that 270 number is that kind of rubric, I want nothing to do with it. But if success is about relationship, and how people know one another, and live and support each other through the ups and downs that is life, and how Jesus fits into all that, well then I want every piece of it.

So what does the future of St. Stephen look like? How can we all grow in relationship? Well, I think it all starts with who hangs out with us. Isaiah spoke the words above to Israel when it wasn't doing the greatest - everyone was away in exile. It was a passage of hope. God was telling the Israelites, "I've got your back."

This next year we'll likely be encountering some serious adventure. We'll be exploring a merger with another congregation - Presbyterians none the less! This adventure is like an exile... it's full of unknowns. It's fairly unknown in the world of the church. There are not too many examples in the ELCA of what we're discerning doing. For that we can be both afraid and excited. And that fear we might have? Well, what does Isaiah say about that? "Do not fear for I am with you." And this is not just a message for our church business of a potential merger, but for our young people, for our families, for our elders and for everyone in between. It's for life outside the church - out in the world. In our jobs, in schools, in retirement... in all that we do.

I'm excited for 2020 and all that it has in store. For all of the relationships with people inside St. Stephen and out. It's my hope for you that you have this same excitement for all God has done and will do.

Peace, blessings, and good stuff,



+Pastor Lyle Snyder

St. Stephen Sunday School Highlights

The 2019-20 Sunday school program started out the year with having 103 children that were registered ranging from 3 year olds through 5th grade. We have 6 classrooms as follows: 3 year olds, 4 year olds, Kindergarten, 1st & 2nd Grade, 3rd & 4th Grade, and 5th grade. Sunday school classes are held between worship services from 9:35am to 10:20am and follow the public school schedule from September through May. There is a break in December for Christmas Program practice as well as Easter Sunday.

Volunteers

We have 24 volunteer teachers this year and try to have 4 teachers per class on a weekly teaching rotation. This year it was difficult to recruit enough teachers and combined grades to make it work based on the number of volunteers. The class sizes are larger than we prefer but have been manageable. We also have 3 volunteers that rotate leading the opening singing prior to Sunday school each week.

Curriculum

Spark: Activate Faith Lectionary is used to connect worship and Sunday school. Each Spark Lectionary lesson follows a four-part sequence:

- Gather – Begin the day by gathering together and trying a warm-up activity
- Open the Bible – Open Bibles and explore the day’s story
- Activate Faith – Get moving and become engaged in the story they just read by using their leaflets
- Send – Finish with a closing activity and prayer

The curriculum is web based and teachers have on-line access to a variety of materials they can pick and choose from for each class including leader guides, lesson prep videos, activities, interactive games, and creative crafts. The Spark Story Bibles are used in all classes and can be found in the sanctuary as well for worship services.

Milestone Ministries

A faith milestone is a marker along life’s journey that says, “This is something important and God is here, too.” Parents, children, baptismal sponsors, and grand-parents come together in this cross generational ministry.

- Marking a milestone is a biblically-based spiritual practice in both home and congregation.
- Helps all generations recognize God’s presence in all of life.
- Families will learn to recognize and mark faith milestones in everyday life.

2019-20 Milestones

Bible Presentation	3 rd Grade	September, 22, 2019
Stewardship	5 th Grade	October 6, 2019
Communion	2 nd Grade	November 10, 2019
Baptism	Kindergarten	January 5, 2020
Welcome to Worship	Preschool	February 2, 2020
Gospel of Mark Introduction	4 th Grade	February 23, 2020
Prayer	1 st Grade	March 1, 2020
Celebration for Gospel of Mark	4 th Grade	April 5, 2020
Welcome School and Story Bible	3 year olds	May 1, 2020

Christmas Program

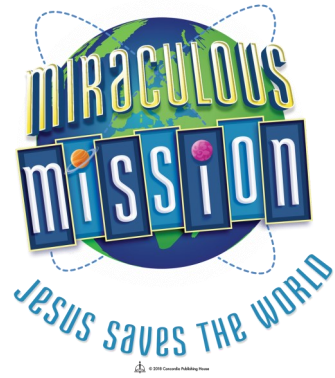
Each year the Sunday school children take part in a Christmas Program. This year was a live nativity with narrator’s telling the Christmas story while the actors played out the story. The children sang both old favorites as well as some fun new songs throughout the program. The program would not be possible without the help of a number of parent volunteers and the time the children spent practicing.

St. Stephen Sunday School Christmas Program





Vacation Bible School



St. Stephen Youth Highlights

The youth were diligent in their fundraising for 2019. St Stephen's allows youth to raise funds in group fundraising activities. The money raised goes into personal youth accounts allocated by the youth's individual contribution to the fundraiser. These funds can then be used for mission trips such as the National Youth Gathering, Klein Ranch, Shetek Camps, Mission trips, and much more. Our annual standard fundraising events are October's Butterbraid Sales, December Cookie Walk, January Pizza Ranch, February Valentines Supper, April Palm Sunday Breakfast, and May Mother's Day Brunch. The youth are very grateful for the congregations continued support of their activities.

~ Stacy Schwartz



Spaghetti Dinner

St. Stephen Youth Highlights



Confirmation Class of 2019



Jr. High Youth Gathering in Willmar

St. Stephen Youth Highlights



Confirmation Class packaging food for "Kids Against Hunger"



2019 High School Graduates



St. Stephen Youth Highlights



Annual Trunk or Treat



Heart-to-Heart

St. Stephen Youth Highlights



Youth Decorating Christmas Trees at Avera



Annual Cookie Walk



St. Stephen CIA

2019 was a very successful year for the CIA youth at St. Stephen.

More on what defines success in a bit.

It was almost 28 years ago to the date that Nirvana came out with one of their most remembered hits, "Come As You Are." Nirvana, along with several other bands (Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden) started a movement that became known as the grunge movement. It was a style of music that depicted a movement away from the societal norms of the time and had young adults throughout the country saying, "let me just be me." Now although Come As You Are has not become an official catchphrase for our CIA youth, it very aptly depicts the resounding attitudes and beliefs we share as a group. Our youth group is about our youth. It's a place where young adults are allowed to speak their minds and address what's on their hearts. Conversely, it's also a place without pressure, a place where people can just unwind, if that's what is needed. Essentially, it's truly a place where all are welcome to Come As They Are!

Now, back to our successes of the past year. If one defines success as having fun, mercy me did we have fun. We ate, we laughed, we played games, we went to NYC for crying out loud. Did we do anything of service to others? Heck yeah, we decorated Christmas trees, we served food to the homeless, we served Lenten meals, we volunteered, and then volunteered some more. But what I feel made the past year more successful than all the aforementioned items, is the number of youth that come to CIA. Now I don't mean overall numbers, because those don't matter. The numbers I am referring to are the number of leaders stepping up to encourage others to attend, the number of 9th graders who attend regularly, the number of youth who reach out with a text or phone call to let us know they are ill and wish they could be there or request prayers. These are the positive steps being made by our youth group, these are the trends of which we are most proud.

At CIA, you Come As You Are and at CIA, you are welcomed As You Are.

All of God's infinite blessings and grace to you all in the year ahead!

~ Seth Boerboom



St. Stephen Youth Mission Trip to New York



St. Stephen LUTHERAN CHURCH

proclaiming and serving Jesus Christ



St. Stephen Softball Team

Children's Message



First Communion Milestone

St. Stephen LUTHERAN CHURCH

proclaiming and serving Jesus Christ



Preschool Director's Report

We have had an awesome year at St. Stephen Preschool! We have been blessed with amazing students and families and an outstanding staff. I am always amazed by the kindness of this congregation as well. We have so many members that come out and support the fundraisers for the preschool and we are so grateful for that support.



This year we have 8 children in the 3 year old class! They LOVE dressing up as superhero's, dancing and building some amazing creations. The 4/5 year old class consists of 12 students. They are a busy class that enjoys dress up, getting messy and just having fun!

We recently welcomed a new volunteer into our classroom, Grandma Eula! She helps us out on Wednesdays in the 3 year old room. The children and staff have loved having her join our program! Welcome Grandma Eula!

We have some exciting events coming up in the preschool. We are preparing for our Open House which will take place in March. We are also organizing a "Jesus and Jammies" Movie Night and our 3rd Annual Carnival and Family Bingo.

Lastly, I want to thank some amazing people: Pastor Lyle, Angie, Lauren, my incredible assistant teachers, Lisa Rosenboom and Melissa Doose, Grandma Eula, Abby Boerboom Photography, the Preschool Board and everyone else who helps make our preschool a wonderful place for children to learn and grow!

Thank YOU!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Grohs".

Melinda Grohs
Director/ Lead Teacher





St. Stephen

LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL





St. Stephen

LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL



2019 Membership Report

Membership Additions (Members Joining through Baptism, Affirmation of Faith, or Transfer)

Post	Brooks	1/13/2019	Baptism	
Zobrist	Michelle	1/14/2019	Our Saviour's Lutheran - Canby, MN	ELCA
Boerboom	Ann	2/14/2019	Tracy Lutheran Church - Tracy, MN	ELCA
Boerboom	Darriel	2/14/2019	Holy Redeemer- Marshall, MN	Non Lutheran
Boerboom	Hayes	2/24/2019	Baptism	
Walker	Charlee	3/11/2019	Our Saviour's Lutheran - Canby, MN	ELCA
Walker	Shanda	3/11/2019	Our Saviour's Lutheran - Canby, MN	ELCA
Walker	Derick	3/11/2019	United Methodist Church - Douglas, MN	Non Lutheran
Carstensen	Nova	4/14/2019	Baptism	
Goslar	Joseph	4/20/2019	Baptism	
Meier	Beau	4/20/2019	Baptism	
Meier	Lana	4/20/2019	Baptism	
West	Boston	5/5/2019	Baptism	
Hoekstra	Nola	5/12/2019	Baptism	
Schreckengost-Weedman	Quinn	5/12/2019	Baptism	
Ludemann	Lucas	5/19/2019	Baptism	
Ahlschlager	Colt	6/2/2019	Baptism	
Larson	Aria	6/23/2019	Baptism	
Larson	Brexton	6/23/2019	Baptism	
Walker	Reggie	6/23/2019	Baptism	
Van Nevel	Laila	7/6/2019	Baptism	
Carstensen	Atli	7/14/2019	Baptism	
Andree	Beckett	8/15/2019	Peace Lutheran Church - Sioux Falls, SD	ELCA
Andree	Grayson	8/15/2019	Peace Lutheran Church - Sioux Falls, SD	ELCA
Andree	Mark	8/15/2019	Peace Lutheran Church - Sioux Falls, SD	ELCA
Andree	Melissa	8/15/2019	Peace Lutheran Church - Sioux Falls, SD	ELCA
DeJong	Emma	8/18/2019	Baptism	
DeJong	Willow	8/18/2019	Baptism	
Landberg	Mila	8/18/2019	Baptism	
Hanson	Ryleigh	8/23/2019	Baptism	
Vosberg	Halsey	8/25/2019	Baptism	
Frandsen	Madelyn	8/28/2019	Baptism	
Martinez	Adrian	9/13/2019	Our Savior's Lutheran - Sacred Heart, MN	ELCA
Bertrand	Jonathan	9/13/2019	Zion Evangelical Lutheran - Sanborn, MN	Other Lutheran
Martinez	Bridgette	9/13/2019	Zion Evangelical Lutheran - Sanborn, MN	Other Lutheran
Boerboom	Piper	9/15/2019	Baptism	
Brewers	Ella	9/15/2019	Baptism	
Wallen	Jack	9/15/2019	Baptism	
Redding	Caitlin	9/23/2019	St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Waseca, MN	Other Lutheran
Miller	Konnor	9/29/2019	Baptism	
Laleman	Aftyn	10/22/2019	St. Luke's Lutheran - Wood Lake, MN	Other Lutheran
Laleman	Beau	10/22/2019	St. Luke's Lutheran - Wood Lake, MN	Other Lutheran
Laleman	Isla	10/22/2019	St. Luke's Lutheran - Wood Lake, MN	Other Lutheran
Laleman	Megan	10/22/2019	St. Luke's Lutheran - Wood Lake, MN	Other Lutheran

2019 Membership Report

Cont.. Membership Additions (Members Joining through Baptism, Affirmation of Faith, or Transfer)

Gustafson	Amanda	10/29/2019	Granite Falls Luth. - Granite Falls, MN	ELCA
Gustafson	Jemma	10/29/2019	Granite Falls Luth. - Granite Falls, MN	ELCA
Jones	Carrie	11/12/2019	Trinity Lutheran Church - Balaton, MN	ELCA
Jones	Cary	11/12/2019	Trinity Lutheran Church - Balaton, MN	ELCA
Jones	Micayla	11/12/2019	Trinity Lutheran Church - Balaton, MN	ELCA
Boerboom	Payton	11/26/2019	Hope Lutheran Church - Minneota, MN	ELCA
Noyes	David	11/26/2019	St. Eloi Church - Ghent, MN	Non Lutheran
Kesteloot	Dru	12/19/2019	Church of St. Michael - Milroy, MN	Non Lutheran
Kesteloot	Kooper	12/19/2019	Church of St. Michael - Milroy, MN	Non Lutheran
Kesteloot	Sarah	12/19/2019	Christ United Pres. - Marshall, MN	Non Lutheran
Braithwaite	Huxley	12/29/2019	Baptism	
Klenken	Emma	12/31/2019	Holy Redeemer - Marshall, MN	Non Lutheran

Total Additions - 56 (27 Baptisms, 15 ELCA, 7 Other Lutheran, 7 non-Lutheran)

Membership Subtractions (Transfers Out, Deaths, Removals from Roster)

Freiborg	Beckett	1/23/2019	Christ Lutheran Church - Cottonwood	ELCA
Freiborg	Hunter	1/23/2019	Christ Lutheran Church - Cottonwood	ELCA
Freiborg	JeRae	1/23/2019	Christ Lutheran Church - Cottonwood	ELCA
Buyse	Caleb	2/25/2019	First Lutheran Church - Brookings, SD	ELCA
Peterson-Thooft	Shirley	3/1/2019	Death	
McChesney	Dennis	3/8/2019	Death	
Gerhardson	Karen	6/8/2019	Death	
Anderson	Clara	6/19/2019	Death	
Peterson	Cyndi	6/25/2019	First Lutheran Church - Marshall, MN	ELCA
Beech	Cole	7/11/2019	First Lutheran Church - Marshall, MN	ELCA
Kleine	Delores	7/24/2019	Death	
Sorenson	Judy	9/4/2019	Death	
Coudron	Lynda	9/16/2019	Death	
Meyer	Gary	10/5/2019	Death	
Kelm	Austin	11/1/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Kelm	Tara	11/1/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Blomme	Aimee	12/3/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Blomme	Camille	12/3/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Blomme	Liam	12/3/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Kvam	Leslie	12/9/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Kvam	Mary	12/9/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Wiger	Loren	12/9/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Wiger	Ruth	12/9/2019	Living Word Luth. - Marshall, MN	Other Lutheran
Wittrock	Linda	12/9/2019	Death	

Total Removed 24 (9 by Death, 6 to ELCA, 9 to Other Lutheran Congregations)

2019 Membership Report

Membership, Beginning of 2019:	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
	1026	793
Members Received in 2019:	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
By Baptism	27	—
By Transfer – ELCA	15	11
By Transfer – Other Lutheran	17	3
By Transfer – Non-Lutheran	7	5
Affirmation of Faith	—	20
<u>Statistical Adjustment</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Received	56	39

Members Removed in 2018:

By Death	9	9
By Transfer – ELCA	6	4
By Transfer – Other Lutheran	9	7
By Transfer – Non-Lutheran	0	0
<u>By Removal, Other, or Statistical Adjustment</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>17</u>
Total Removed	26	37

Membership, End of 2019 **1056*** **795**

**Total Baptized Membership is 986 Active, 56 Inactive, 2 Lost and 12 Shut-in)*

Membership Totals:	<u>Year</u>	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
	2019	1056	795
	2018	1026	793
	2017	1011	748
	2016	992	665
	2015	1,081	698

Baptized Member Turnover:	<u>Year</u>	<u>Gains</u>	<u>Losses</u>	<u>Net</u>
	2019	56	26	+30
	2018	64	49	+15
	2017	70	51	+19
	2016	70	159	-89
	2015	46	81	-35
	2014	53	29	+24

2019 Membership Report

Baptisms

Post	Brooks	1/13/2019
Boerboom	Hayes	2/24/2019
Carstensen	Nova	4/14/2019
Goslar	Joseph	4/20/2019
Meier	Beau	4/20/2019
Meier	Lana	4/20/2019
West	Boston	5/5/2019
Hoekstra	Nola	5/12/2019
Schreckengost-Weedman	Quinn	5/12/2019
Ludemann	Lucas	5/19/2019
Ahlschlager	Colt	6/2/2019
Larson	Aria	6/23/2019
Larson	Brexton	6/23/2019
Walker	Reggie	6/23/2019
Van Nevel	Laila	7/6/2019
Carstensen	Atli	7/14/2019
DeJong	Emma	8/18/2019
DeJong	Willow	8/18/2019
Landberg	Mila	8/18/2019
Hanson	Ryleigh	8/23/2019
Vosberg	Halsey	8/25/2019
Frandsen	Madelyn	8/28/2019
Boerboom	Piper	9/15/2019
Brewers	Ella	9/15/2019
Wallen	Jack	9/15/2019
Miller	Konnor	9/29/2019
Braithwaite	Huxley	12/29/2019

Total: 27

Marriages

Shania Meier and Lucas Amundson	2/23/2019
Rachel Gruhot and Eric Mertz	6/22/2019
Rachel Clark and Douglas Fischer	8/17/2019
Danielle French and Jordan Carstensen	9/21/2019
Bridgette Cohrs and Adrian Martinez	12/21/2019

Total: 5

Affirmations of Baptism

Curtis	Mika	4/28/2019
Doose	Miranda	4/28/2019
Edens	Dalton	4/28/2019
Goslar	Joseph	4/28/2019
Johnson	Tera	4/28/2019
Leibfried	Zachary	4/28/2019
Loft	Regan	4/28/2019
Rosenboom	Logan	4/28/2019
Schwartz	Sophia	4/28/2019
Tracy	Nevaeh	4/28/2019
Wixon	Brayden	4/28/2019
Bednarek	Alexsa	5/5/2019
Brandt	Reagan	5/5/2019
Ehlers	Grace	5/5/2019
Fossum	Joey	5/5/2019
Klemm	Malachi	5/5/2019
Lewis	Kayleigh	5/5/2019
Simon	Isaac	5/5/2019
Valdez	Skylar	5/5/2019
Wallen	Andrew	5/5/2019

Total: 20

Funerals

McChesney	Dennis	3/8/2019
Gerhardson	Karen	6/2/2019
Anderson	Clara	6/19/2019
Klein	Delores	7/24/2019
Soreson	Judy	9/4/2019
Meyer	Gary	10/5/2019
Wittrock	Linda	12/9/2019

Total: 7

Everyday Spirituality & Congregational Vitality

2019-2020 Bishop Jon Anderson Annual Report

I love this parable.

“Help us to find God,” the disciples asked the elder.

“No one can help you to do that,” the elder said.

“Why not?” the disciples asked amazed.

“For the same reason that no one can help fish to find the ocean.”

-Joan Chittister

Wisdom Distilled from Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today – p. 28

The parable reminds us of the incomprehensible mystery, beauty, presence and wonder of God. It calls us to conversion from worshipping a safe, small house idol who does what we need and want, to remind that our God is the creator, redeemer and sanctifier of all that exists. Jesus is the one who reveals God to us most deeply.

In the coming year we will continue to lift up God’s gifts focusing on the cross, where we know God and ourselves most deeply. We will encourage people to attend to their spiritual life knowing that our longing to see our congregations thrive and flourish begins with what is happening in us as we gather to hear the Good News, receive the sacraments, offer our lives back to the one who made and sends us to serve in our personal and communal daily callings

Our synod will focus on God’s call **to deepen congregational vitality** in the coming year. We will invite you to think about what makes a congregation vital? How does God do that? What do we need to encourage? What is unimportant to God? Congregational vitality begins with the deep waters of baptism and God’s grace that calls us to faith. Congregational vitality is reinforced as we gather to hear the Good News and receive the meal of God’s grace and love that comes from outside of us. Congregational vitality sends us to love our neighbors and God’s creation. Congregational vitality inspires us to invite others into the conversation with God and into the community that bears Christ’s name.

We need to notice and receive the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives and our life together today We also need to remember to lament what has changed. Many of our congregations, our synod, our larger Church body and the Christian movement are facing heavy head winds. We are not the first to experience change in our culture, but it is not easy for leaders or our congregations.

One of our former pastors shared this wisdom from her work with the sick and dying to the challenges of congregations who struggle like we do as individuals to face losses. Pastor Anne Andert used these three questions to claim and lament the transitions of loss.

What is lost? What is left? What is possible?

To these three questions, I want to ask this missional question.

“What will serve the Gospel now?”

Congregational vitality grows out of noticing our assets, noticing our opportunities and then experimenting leaning forward in the hope that grows out of the Story of Jesus and God’s resurrecting grace. God is working in our lives and experience today as well.

Our synod will invite congregations into a deep and wide conversations about their health, assets and the mission field where God has placed them. God calls them to proclaim and live out the Good News we know in Jesus. We will lift up a variety of tools, writings and spiritual practices. For example, we want to invite your congregation to explore the <http://congregationalvitalitysurvey.com/> instrument. We also will share resources to enter into and accelerate the faithful innovation. Congregations are called to...

- a. **Listen** to God, each other, ourselves, and the World
- b. **Reconnect** with God's story and God's faithfulness
- c. **Define** the challenges we are facing
- d. **Reframe** our expectations and goals
- e. **Cultivate** new ways of being the church through spiritual practices and innovation

Luther Seminary Faithful Innovation

Congregational vitality grows out of encouraging and supporting your pastor and lay leadership. Instead of imagining these leaders are replaceable parts who are to be blamed when our congregations struggle, what if we began to imagine and encourage the idea that they are renewable resources who need to have support to serve as your Spiritual Shepherds and of your congregation? This includes encouraging them to make time to preach and teach the faith well. It includes lay people joining with pastors in the joy of pastoral visitation on behalf of the congregation. It means celebrating confirmation guides and teachers as faith formation servants engaging the Bible and the gifts of our tradition so people can better live out their everyday spiritualities. God invites us to have fun, tell holy and powerful stories about our lives. God calls us to share our pain and challenges and walk together in trusting that God is with us. Christ Jesus is out in front of us calling us to follow.

Congregational vitality means moving beyond welcoming people, to actually find ways to invite "new people" into the many doors of a congregation's life. Some will find meaning joining you to serve. Some will enjoy joining you to experience community, fun and laughter. Some will join you to learn about the Christian faith and its connections to the world. Some will come broken, lonely, lost, not sure what drove them into sadness and now towards the light. God's Spirit is working in our midst, in our lives, in our communities and in our world.

Our larger synod and churchwide organization are engaging in important work as well. We are focusing on leadership and congregational vitality which we know begins with the forming of faith at home and in communities. Your churchwide system is working to open more space for innovation, while engaging the challenges of racism, sexism, opening ourselves to create sanctuary and continuing to receive the gifts of women even as we celebrate fifty years of the ordination of women. Your synod sees congregational vitality to include helping congregations listen to their mission context, developing lay and rostered people to guide us into the next chapter of ministry in Jesus name. We are working on encouraging people to consider rostered service.

Your synod office is thankful for your ongoing generosity and support. We are thankful for the servants who serve and those who have dedicated many years of service (Carla Klawitter and Larry Strenge, who retired this year). We are also thankful for all the people who are stepping forward to guide your congregation and synod.



*"But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
- Matthew 6*



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Shetek Lutheran Ministries
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Slayton, MN 56172
(507)-763-3567
slbc@fontiernet.net
www.shetek.org
Executive Director – Marv Nysetvold

Greetings from your camp – Shetek Lutheran Ministries!

Our theme for summer 2019 was “Transformed Community”, with the theme verse “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God.....” Romans12:2 We learned how God’s love transforms us so we can, with God’s help, transform and change our communities for the good. Speaking of change, our community at camp is changing. Kathy Peterson, our Development Director, retired this summer after many years of faithful service and Dana Isaacson, our Program Director, accepted another Program Director position at Camp EWALU in Iowa. We are so grateful for their ministry over the years and wish them the best. We will miss them but are looking forward to welcoming new members to our staff community and their ideas and contributions to Shetek’s ministry!

During summer 2019, 819 campers experienced Christ centered adventure and learning at Shetek Lutheran Ministries. We continued our Cross-generational programs, which include ABC Camp, Family Camp and Grandparent/Grandchild Camp. This past summer we had two full sessions of our Activities Building Campers (A.B.C.) program for 1st-3rd graders to experience camp for a 24 hour period with their favorite adult (parent, aunt/uncle, godparent, etc.). We again offered Explorer Camp, which included basketball, guitar, arts & crafts, animal adventures, and discovery. The seven sessions of the ever popular Grandparent/Grandchild camp were very well attended this past summer. The Saturday evening services in Christ Chapel continued throughout the summer for a tenth year.

Our \$1.5 million “Building on the Foundation” campaign began this year and has been very well received. Over \$959,000 in cash/pledges have been raised so far this year! We are very grateful for the donors who have provided the support and leadership for the campaign. We plan to begin construction in 2020 on the first project. The congregational phase of the campaign will begin in 2020 and you’ll hear much more about our plans and progress when we visit our member congregations.

Many physical improvements/additions occurred in 2019. Volunteers who come for their family reunion in the summer landscaped in front of the chapel and added a bench in memory of Ardhil Frederickson. They also added a sidewalk to the storm shelter and landscaped around the big swings in the courtyard. New pumps and controls for heating were installed in the Activity Center and a new boiler was installed in the apartments. Asphalt was laid in part of the circle in front of the chapel and landscaping was done around Christ Chapel. The south end of the Lakota Retreat center was re-shingled. The John Deere mower got a cab which really helps with protecting the driver when removing snow! After camp lost power for 5 days in the storm in April, we got a generator to provide power in future outages. These are some highlights; many other improvements occurred as well.

Shetek Lutheran Ministries staff and board thank you so much for your prayers and support and wish you God’s blessings in 2020. We’d love to see you at your camp!!!

Marv Nysetvold, Executive Director

Shetek’s Board of Directors – Stacy Frost, Marla Hawes, Lora Hopp-Hansen, Krista Kopperud, LaMont Kucker, Brian Matson, Pastor Jeanette McCormick, Pastor Wayne Meidinger, Leon Mortland, Pastor Dan Nelson, Laura Phillips, Pastor Andrew Schensted, Pastor Charles Swanson, Elias Youngquist and Rhonda Youngquist.

Shetek’s staff in Dec. 2019 – Sandy Carlson, Tom Carlson, Katie Chapman, Nora Dahlhoff, Sharon Haugen, Jean Larson, Marv Nysetvold, Joe Stefanick, Bonnie Steilow, Jessica Van Dam, Ella (Jane) Wahl, Mary Zabel.

ST. Stephen Lutheran Church
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2019

	Dec 31, 19
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
11001 · GENERAL FUND CHECKING ACCT	143,923.44
Total Checking/Savings	143,923.44
Accounts Receivable	
11000 · Accounts Receivable	9,584.91
Total Accounts Receivable	9,584.91
Total Current Assets	153,508.35
Other Assets	
17105 · BUILDING	1,885,453.83
Total Other Assets	1,885,453.83
TOTAL ASSETS	2,038,962.18
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20501 · A/P GENERAL ACCOUNT	121.14
Total Accounts Payable	121.14
Other Current Liabilities	
Payroll Liabilities	-3,007.75
23000 · PENSION - EMP. CONT.	7,219.76
24000 · FLEX SPENDING PLAN	492.01
Total Other Current Liabilities	4,704.02
Total Current Liabilities	4,825.16
Long Term Liabilities	
25605 · BUILDING LOAN	687,016.73
Total Long Term Liabilities	687,016.73
Total Liabilities	691,841.89
Equity	
Retained Earnings	126,290.85
27500 · BUILDING EQUITY	1,198,437.10
Net Income	22,392.34
Total Equity	1,347,120.29
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	2,038,962.18

St. Stephen Lutheran Youth
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2019

	Dec 31, 19
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
12501 · St. Stephen Youth Checking Acct	15,367.01
Total Checking/Savings	15,367.01
Accounts Receivable	
11000 · Accounts Receivable	-6,243.06
Total Accounts Receivable	-6,243.06
Other Current Assets	
12000 · Undeposited Funds	16.71
Total Other Current Assets	16.71
Total Current Assets	9,140.66
TOTAL ASSETS	9,140.66
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20000 · Accounts Payable	116.36
Total Accounts Payable	116.36
Total Current Liabilities	116.36
Total Liabilities	116.36
Equity	
30000 · Opening Balance Equity	7,013.51
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	-3,290.05
Net Income	5,300.84
Total Equity	9,024.30
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	9,140.66

St. Stephen Lutheran Preschool
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2019

	Dec 31, 19
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Bremer Bank	3,534.52
Total Checking/Savings	3,534.52
Accounts Receivable	
11000 · Accounts Receivable	11,185.73
Total Accounts Receivable	11,185.73
Other Current Assets	
12000 · Undeposited Funds	2,069.00
Total Other Current Assets	2,069.00
Total Current Assets	16,789.25
TOTAL ASSETS	16,789.25
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20000 · Accounts Payable	5,198.62
Total Accounts Payable	5,198.62
Total Current Liabilities	5,198.62
Total Liabilities	5,198.62
Equity	
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	13,258.09
Net Income	-1,667.46
Total Equity	11,590.63
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	16,789.25

**ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH
2020 BUDGET**

Acct #	Description	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2020 Budget
	INCOME			
31501	Envelope Offerings - General	\$ 270,000	\$ 290,168	\$ 290,000
35305	Building fund	\$ 18,500	\$ 13,451	\$ 13,000
34902	Special Appeals Giving (Designat	\$ -	\$ 10,849	\$ -
31701	Loose Offerings	\$ 9,000	\$ 10,394	\$ 10,000
32001	Confirmation	\$ 2,300	\$ -	\$ -
32101	Vacation Bible School	\$ 1,600	\$ -	\$ -
34101	Rent for Church	\$ 12,140	\$ 12,855	\$ 12,500
36301	ELCA Missionary Sponsorship	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,664	\$ 3,000
	Other giving	\$ 3,700	\$ 3,782	\$ 3,000
	TOTAL INCOME	\$ 320,240	\$ 344,163	\$ 331,500

**ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH
2020 BUDGET**

Acct #	Description	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2020 Budget
INVESTMENTS				
PERSONNEL				
0401 & 5300	Professional and Staff Salaries	\$ 96,251	\$ 98,438	\$ 100,900
50601	Housing Allowance	\$ 15,490	\$ 16,447	\$ 16,858
50701	Car Allowance (mileage)	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,484	\$ 1,500
51001	Pensions	\$ 6,432	\$ 6,431	\$ 6,592
51301	FICA Off-Set Allowance	\$ 4,566	\$ 4,563	\$ 4,677
51601	Medical/Dental/Other Insurance	\$ 22,367	\$ 20,321	\$ 20,829
52201	Continuing Education	\$ 1,300	\$ 562	\$ 1,500
53401	Organists' Salaries	\$ 6,780	\$ 7,085	\$ 7,262
53701	Choir Director/Accompanist Salaries	\$ 700	\$ -	\$ 700
54201	Pension Plan	\$ 4,318	\$ 4,473	\$ 4,585
54301	FICA W/H	\$ 4,511	\$ 4,689	\$ 4,806
54601	Workers' Compensation	\$ 255	\$ 799	\$ 819
54901	Synod Functions (Conventions)	\$ 300	\$ 101	\$ 300
	Other	-		
	TOTAL	\$ 164,770	\$ 165,394	\$ 171,328
OFFICE				
55601	Telephone	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,059	\$ 2,100
55701	Postage	\$ 1,700	\$ 1,854	\$ 1,900
55801	Office Supplies	\$ 2,260	\$ 1,681	\$ 1,750
55901	Computer Equipment	\$ 700	\$ 40	\$ 1,000
56001	Computer Software and Maintenance	\$ 1,800	\$ 2,353	\$ 2,500
	TOTAL	\$ 8,460	\$ 7,987	\$ 9,250
BUILDING & GROUNDS				
60505	Bldg Mortgage	\$ 59,976	\$ 59,976	\$ 59,976
56601	Fuel and Utilities	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,726	\$ 14,000
57201	Janitorial Supplies	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,473	\$ 1,500
57501	Insurance	\$ 8,700	\$ 5,983	\$ 6,000

57801	Custodian	\$ 12,500	\$ 13,861	\$ 14,000
58101	Furniture/Fixtures	\$ 500	\$ 2,887	\$ 3,000
58401	Maintenance Contracts	\$ 11,000	\$ 11,813	\$ 11,900
58701	Building Maintenance	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,368	\$ 10,000
59901	Equipment Repairs	\$ 6,700	\$ 986	\$ 1,000
60201	Bank Charges	\$ 400	\$ 360	\$ 400
61201	Miscellaneous	\$ -	\$ 18,872	\$ -
	TOTAL	\$ 119,076	\$ 132,305	\$ 121,776
	FELLOWSHIP & NURTURE			
62001	Quilters	\$ 800	\$ 716	\$ 800
62101	Church-wide Fellowship	\$ 1,520	\$ 1,552	\$ 1,600
	TOTAL	\$ 2,320	\$ 2,268	\$ 2,400
	WORSHIP & MUSIC			
63901	Worship	\$ 1,000	\$ 808	\$ 1,000
64001	Altar Guild	\$ 350	\$ 230	\$ 300
64201	Sound System	\$ 340	\$ 540	\$ 300
64601	Flowers	\$ 1,400	\$ 966	\$ 1,200
	TOTAL	\$ 3,090	\$ 2,544	\$ 2,800
	STEWARDSHIP			
65301	Offering Envelopes	\$ 1,200	\$ 942	\$ 1,000
65401	Stewardship	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,849	\$ 2,000
65501	ELCA - Mission Support			
65701	Bible Camp Ministry			
65801	Campus Ministry			
66301	ELCA - Mission Sponsorship	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,664	\$ 3,000
66401	Lutheran Social Services		\$ 188	\$ -
	TOTAL	\$ 5,500	\$ 5,643	\$ 6,000
	EDUCATION			
67401	Books	\$ 1,000	\$ 563	\$ 1,000
67501	Confirmation	\$ 1,500	\$ 36	\$ 1,500
67601	Vacation Bible School	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ 300
67801	Nursery & Baptisms	\$ 2,400	\$ 325	\$ 1,000
	Sunday School	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,128	\$ 3,500

	TOTAL	\$ 8,700	\$ 4,052	\$ 7,300
	EVANGELISM			
68701	Evangelism	\$ 100	\$ 39	\$ 100
68801	Advertising - Newspaper	\$ 300	\$ 212	\$ 250
69101	Bus Ministry	\$ 200	\$ 328	\$ 350
	TOTAL	\$ 600	\$ 579	\$ 700
	YOUTH & FAMILY			
69601	Youth Board	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,500
	TOTAL	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,500
	TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$ 313,516	\$ 321,770	\$ 324,054
	DIFFERENCE	\$ 6,724	\$ 22,393	\$ 7,446

AUTHORIZATION FORM



The **Simply Giving** Program
endorsed by



FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	ENVELOPE/DONOR #	DATE
Effective date of authorization: ____/____/____		
Type of authorization: <input type="checkbox"/> New authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation amount <input type="checkbox"/> Change donation date <input type="checkbox"/> Change banking information <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue electronic donation		
Last Name	First Name	
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email Address		
DATE OF FIRST DONATION: ____/____/____	FREQUENCY OF DONATION: <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly – Mondays <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 th	FUNDS: <input type="checkbox"/> General/Operating <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
		AMOUNTS: \$ _____ \$ _____ Total \$ _____
CHECKING / SAVINGS	Please debit my donation from my (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Savings Account (contact your financial institution for Routing #) <input type="checkbox"/> Checking Account (attach a voided check below)	Routing Number: _____ Valid Routing # must start with 0, 1, 2, or 3 Account Number: _____
	I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to my account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.	
Authorized Signature: _____		Date: _____

If using a checking account, please attach a voided check at the bottom of this page.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OPENING LITURGY

Litany

- L. Gathering together as God's people in this place, may we always be aware of your presence in our midst.
- C. Lord, may we always be aware of your presence.
- L. Knowing that the Word is our light, may we continue to grow in our scriptural and confessional understandings.
- C. Lord, may our minds continue to grow in your word.
- L. Recognizing that stepping out in faith is not easy, we ask that you give us strength, O Lord, to listen and be bold and daring.
- C. Lord, give us the patience to listen and the strength to be bold and daring.
- L. While we strive to know ourselves and your will for us, may we build our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- C. Lord, help us to build faith-filled and healthy relationships with others.
- L. Recognizing that we are often the ones asking, "And who is my neighbor?," may we open our eyes, ears and hearts to all those in the community in which we live.
- C. Lord, may we always be open to those in the community in which we live.
- L. Recognizing the importance of Moses, the prophets and disciples, may we work together to accompany and raise up leaders for your church.
- C. Lord, may we have the insight, encouragement and skills to raise up courageous leaders.
- L. Recognizing the many gifts you have entrusted to us, may we use these gifts to do your work in the world today.
- C. Lord, may we use the gifts entrusted to us to do your work.

God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind

1 God of tem - pest, God of whirl-wind, as on Pen - te -
 2 God of blaz - ing, God of burn - ing, all that blocks your
 3 God of earth - quake, God of thun - der, shake us loose from
 4 God of pas - sion, God un - sleep - ing, stir in us love's

cost de - scend! Drive us out from shel - tered com - fort;
 pur - pose, purge! Through your church, Christ's liv - ing Bod - y,
 leth - ar - gy! Break the chains of sin a - sun - der,
 rest - less - ness! Where the peo - ple cry in an - guish,

past these walls your peo - ple send! Sweep us in - to cost - ly ser - vice,
 let your flam - ing Spir - it surge! Where de - ceit con - ceals in - jus - tice,
 for earth's heal - ing set us free! Crum - ble walls that still di - vide us;
 may we share your heart's dis - tress. Rouse us from con - tent with e - vil;

there with Christ to bear the cross, there with Christ to bear the cross!
 kin - dle us to speak your truth, kin - dle us to speak your truth!
 make us one in Christ our Lord, make us one in Christ our Lord!
 claim us for your king - dom's work, claim us for your king - dom's work!

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 Music: John Hughes
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- L. Let us pray. As we strive to be your church of the present and the future, may we nurture a spirit of collaboration and solidarity. May we all be partners in sharing the gospel and believing in Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.
- C. Amen.

Beyond the Wall: Making All Things New



When have you discovered newness in life through Christ? Did you have to step out in faith to do so? Perhaps you had to let go of your will and accept God's will. This

is a major turning point in the faith journey of many people. There are examples in Scripture about Job (Job 29-30), Elijah (I Kings 19:4-14), Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-2) and the women at the tomb (Luke 23:55 – 24:5). Consider the story of the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30). He approached Jesus with a simple question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." When the young man heard this, he was very sad and walked away, because he was very rich. Given the choice, he found it difficult to forsake wealth in this world for the promise of God and eternal life.

Sometimes there are barriers or walls that complicate trying something new or stepping out in faith. What walls or barriers have you encountered? Consider the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), who wanted to witness Jesus preaching but was too short to see past the crowd. After Zacchaeus climbed a tree, Jesus called out to him and invited himself to lunch in Zacchaeus' home. We know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus,

and he was a different person afterward. He had changed from wanting wealth and success in this world to desiring significance through a life of faith. When have you, or your congregation, chosen success over significance? Perhaps when using numbers or the size of your facilities as a measure. Moving toward significance usually means sacrificing success. In what areas of ministry is your congregation seeking significance today?

Stepping out in faith may be a personal choice for a short time but usually involves accompanying others. As members in the body of Christ, we are not called to meet our own needs alone. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) calls us to go beyond our barriers and bring the message of Jesus Christ to others. This helps us grow beyond a Christian enclave to become servants of Christ and a serving community. In what ways has your congregation moved from an enclave to a servant community?

Overcoming barriers and walls to make things new involves stepping out in faith. It means shaking loose from lethargy and moving out from sheltered comfort. In the process we break the chains of sin that hold us back and divide us from making us one in Christ. When we share in the distress of God's heart to do the kingdom's work, we are in tune with God's will, choosing significance over success and becoming a servant community. This is when we feel the vitality of our faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. May you experience this newness in Christ in and through your ministry.