



*Honor the Lord with everything you have
give God the first and the best
(Proverbs 3:9).*

Stewardship is the one of the words we use in the church to describe how we honor the Lord with all we have — giving God our time, our energy, our skills, and our money. But we can use other words too.

Giving to God is an **act of worship**. We actually take up offerings of financial gifts during our worship service. During the “passing of the plate,” we often receive an offering of special music from a soloist, the choir, or our Sunday School children. The song represents a sharing of musical talent along with the time and energy that went into learning and rehearsing the piece. Our ushers, greeters, lectors, communion assistants, acolytes are all giving of their time and energy in worship. Others sponsor oil for the eternity lamp, flowers for the altar, or fair trade coffee for fellowship time, and/or bring in treats to share.

We honor God with our gifts of time, energy, talent and money as an **expression of faith, trust and thanksgiving**. Giving to God is how we acknowledge that everything we are and everything we have comes from God. Giving to God is how we give thanks for the blessings we have received, paying them forward so that others may be blessed too.

Giving to God is a **spiritual discipline** that helps us grow and mature spiritually as disciples of Christ. Along with prayer, worship, study, service, encouraging and inviting, *giving is how we learn to love like Jesus*. Jesus tells us “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). What we do with our treasure — those things that we value the most — determines who we are inside and what sort of people we will become.

Understanding stewardship as an act of worship, an expression of faith, and a spiritual discipline that shapes the kind of people we are and will become, let us set a goal to be gracious, grateful and generous, giving to God the first fruits and the best of our time, energy, skills and money.

Blessings

Pastor Ritva

First Fruits: Giving Our Best...

...not our leftovers





As our congregation prepares to think about our commitments to the Lord's church, I desired to share with you a few thoughts on how your commitments have had a positive impact on youth and young adults. A few years ago, the congregation identified

that the Lord was leading us to build up the youth of St. Stephen's. This led to the decision to hire a youth director, and my position as Youth and Young Adult Minister came into being.

In addition to this significant addition to the staff, St. Stephen's has supported youth and young adults by creating budget line items for both groups which allow us to have curriculum for faith discussions, fun activities, food for gatherings, and participation in various events. Many of you have also made commitments to be mentors, support fundraisers, and pray for our youth and young adults. We have even begun to send care packages to our college students twice a year.

So on behalf of the youth and young adults of our congregation and community, let me say thank you for the commitments which you have made in the past. I would also like to encourage you to regularly renew that commitment. Keep your eyes open for new ways to volunteer, regular opportunities to interact with our youth and young adults, and those fundraisers which support special events.

Do not forget that our annual Apple Pie Fundraiser is just a month away. This year we are preparing to attend the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston so will need your support more than ever.

Blessings,

Mark Howland

Youth & Young Adult Minister



In visiting with hospice patients and listening to their stories, a number of different topics come up.

While many offer stories of time well spent with their children and grandchildren, taking trips and celebrating birthdays, perfecting hobbies;

just as many get teary eyed as they list off regrets of working too much or not setting aside enough time to do the things that they enjoyed.

In fact, research suggests that this is a common occurrence in end of life care. Toward the end of our lives, we find ourselves asking, how could I have stewarded my time differently, how could I have spent my time in a way that I could be proud of now? As many lay dying, they look back on their lives and wish that they had used those vacation days or taken that extra hour in their week to learn or better a new skill. But many also complete their journey by doing just these things. They make the most of their time by inviting family and friends to come and visit so that they do steward the last of their time here on earth well.

And these are the visits that I often leave and ask myself the same questions, how do I steward my time? How do I give the first and best of my time away to myself and to others? Perhaps in asking ourselves these questions before we enter the last leg of our race, we can answer them more fully and look back with a smile and joy.

God's peace,

Vicar Mikayla Kopp

The Stewardship Survey — Why? What Did We Learn?

The Stewardship Survey that ran from September 3-15 was an information gathering tool, designed get a sense of what people are “thinking” in two areas of our life together. We received 20 on-line responses, and 10 paper responses. Here is a summary of responses along with some explanation.

Q 1. Who do you believe actually knows how much you give to the church? (check all that apply)

Finance Committee	5
Financial Secretary	28
Counters	7
Treasurer	9
Council President	2
Pastor	4

Q 2. Who do you believe should know how much you give to the church? (check all that apply)

Counters	4
Financial Secretary	23
Finance Committee	5
Treasurer	8
Council President	4
Pastor	10
God	16

Who actually knows how much you give at St. Stephen’s? The **counters** (named in the Sunday bulletin insert each week) are responsible for opening, counting and recording all the gifts received in the offering plate on Sunday mornings. The **financial secretary** (Jenny Weber) receives and records all pledges and gifts received, manages the Electronic Funds Transfers (EFTs) and online gifts, and issues quarterly giving reports to members. **The Pastor, Council and Finance Committee receive only numeric data about pledges and giving trends, and have no way of identifying who gives how much.**

The question about **who should know how much you give** emerged from Council’s study of J. Clif Christopher’s book **Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship** (2008). **He argues that pastors should know how much each member gives, and must be fundraisers.** Ten respondents appear to agree that pastors should know how much members give. Pastors as a rule have mixed feelings on this issue.

Question 3 asked about financial priorities for 2018. Responses included: increasing mission support to the SEIA Synod (8); maintaining the internship program (14); maintaining or growing the Youth and Youth Adult Minister’s position (2); community outreach (1); providing someone to visit the home-bound and struggling (1); serving others (1); local mission support (1); long term financial security (1); and unable to respond because there are many other financial areas to be evaluated (1).

Question 4 asked which of our five strategic goals is most important for 2018: Growing vibrant children’s and youth ministries (11); deepening member engagement through small groups (8); inviting others to share our story, i.e. outreach/evangelism (5); expanding our neighborhood ministries (4); and building renovations (2).

Thank you to all who participated. Your responses will be considered as our Finance Committee and Council begin the budgeting process for 2018.



Practice Discipleship in Daily Life

Join us as we explore the seven faith practices that are the foundation for following Jesus in daily life: Worship, Prayer, Encourage, Study, Give, Invite, Serve.

WORSHIP

Sunday Fall Worship Schedule, 8:00 and 10:30am.

Wednesday Worship is at 6:30pm according to the following schedule:

- 1st Wednesday ... Taize-Style Worship
- 2nd Wednesday ... Interactive Worship
- 3rd Wednesday ... Healing Service
- 4th Wednesday ... Interactive Worship
- 5th Wednesday ... Youth-Led Worship

Would you like to sing with us? Join us Wednesday nights following worship at 7:15-8:15pm. **Childcare is provided during rehearsals. Following rehearsal, there is a craft beer exchange!**

STUDY

Sunday Morning Children's Time at 9:15 am.

Spark Lectionary Curriculum for ages 3-5 and 1st-4th grades. Gather in the Children's Place (lower level).

Music with David Haas: the 2nd Sunday of each month, after opening devotions in the Children's Place (lower level), the children come up to the sanctuary to learn a song they can offer during the 2nd service.

Sunday morning High School Youth Discussion: (Youth Room) - see website for topics.

Life Long Learning 9:15am (Fellowship Hall) see Sunday bulletin insert for topics.

Bring Your Bible to Brunch the 1st & 3rd Sundays each month, at Lion Bridge, 59 16th Ave. Join Pastor Ritva and John as they explore the lectionary readings for the following Sunday.

Men's Coffee & Study Group (Mondays at 8am) at Mr. Beans in Marion.

Women's Bible Study (Tuesdays at 10am) studying Wm. Paul Young's book, *Lies We Believe about God*. You can order it from Amazon (\$10.97 paperback; \$10.99 Kindle) or Barnes & Noble (\$14.35 hard cover; \$10.99 Nook). Copies of assigned chapters are also available each Sunday in the narthex.

Wednesday Evening Confirmation Program for Middle School Youth (6th-8th grades) in Room 9. Contact Pastor Ritva or YYAM Mark Howland for more information.

INVITE

WomenWineWisdom – Thursday October 5, 6pm at White Star Ale House, 305 2nd Ave SE. RSVP Amy at amykuhn2@aol.com or 270-6365. Childcare and rides can be arranged.

Women 50+ Luncheon - Tuesday, October 10, 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall. For information, RSVP Ardell Begalske at reb4724@imonmail.com or 319-393-7073.

Trunk or Treat, Wednesday, October 25, 5:45pm in the parking lot and backyard. See ad on page 5

SERVE

CROP Walk, Sunday, October 8 at Thomas Park. Registration begins at 1:00 pm, walk begins at 1:30 pm. The youth will be collecting donations. Contact Mark Howland, Youth & Young Adult Minister.

Quilting Ministry: Contact Barbara Kusler – 319-826-3794 (home).

GIVE

Opportunities to Sign Up for Altar Flowers – Sponsoring flowers for the altar is a nice way to honor a loved one's birthday, anniversary, or other special date. Sign up is easy! Go through Signup Genius <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050b45aaad2da20-flowers>.

The cost is \$25. You can place a check in the offering with "flowers" on the memo line or pay online. Take your flowers home after the second service or leave them to be shared with a member who cannot attend services.

L.O.A.F. MINISTRY UPDATE

HACAP tells us that homelessness affects 21,000 Iowans of all walks of life. We have seen this first hand. This summer L.O.A.F. has assisted:

- a **well-educated woman** who was wrongfully dismissed secure temporary housing.
- an **Iraq war veteran** avoid losing his apartment in between jobs.
- a **disabled woman** move from temporary shelter to more secure rental housing.

The cost to us was \$665. The difference we have made in these persons' lives is too great to calculate. **Please help us continue making a difference in the lives of our neighbors by making a gift to L.O.A.F. today!**

LORD

Hear Our Prayers



Members

Steve Thomas
Mick Butz
Pete Hansen
Joan Petersen
Toni Lee
Judy Nye
Harriet Hemphill
Elfriede Hansen
Ann Kleman
Jane Severide

Relatives

Trent Rosberg
Dave Goepfert
Berdella Pitz
Mary Rose Barnotes

Gertrude Lee
John Rosentreter
Alan Henderson
Leah Crawford
Cindy Kopp
Abigail Below
James Williams

Friends

Pat Schnitzel
Glenna Houtz
Michelle Stafford
Jerime Mitchell
Alice Adams
Phyllis Stark
Martha Handley
Rachel Hollingshead

Serving in the military and/or overseas

Alex Grafft, Army National Guard

Please contact the office or use a Prayer Request card (in your pew rack) to place your loved one's name on this list for two weeks and/or request prayer of the Monday Prayer Team. If your loved one desires a pastoral visit, please contact Pastor Ritva.

**FALL 2017
ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP
APPEAL**

Check your mail for the brochure
with full details.

**CONSECRATION SUNDAY
OCTOBER 15**

All commitments received by
October 15 will be entered into a
draw for a fabulous prize!

Wednesday, October 25, 5:45pm



**Bring your family!
Bring your friends and neighbors!**

To our first Hallowe'en Trunk or Treat Event
featuring:

- Devotions around the fire
- Snack Station under the Tent
- Games, e.g. glow-in-the-dark bowling, donut-on-a-string, witch hat ring toss
- Trick or Treating

Needed:

- Cars decorated for Hallowe'en and staffed by persons in costume (or wearing an ugly Hallowe'en sweater) and filled with goodies to hand out

Questions? Contact Amy Kuhn
amykuhn2@aol.com

Reformation Hymn Festival

Celebrating 500 Years

Sponsored by the congregations of the Cedar River Conference

Sunday, October 29, 2017 at 4:00 pm



First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids

An Oktoberfest Meal following

Healing through Harmony

Jaden's life changed when he was 5 years old. His father unexpectedly passed away, and through his grief, Jaden's connection to his mother became strained and he struggled to manage his anger at home. He was placed in LSI's Beloit Residential Treatment Center in Ames when he was 10, and he remembers being introduced to Spiritual Life. The voluntary LSI program connects youth in residential treatment with faith-based art, music, and film. It is there to serve as a safe space for children to open up about their emotions and get the support they need to thrive.

"I always knew I loved to sing and I liked music," Jaden says. "Songs made me feel better, and music allowed me to express myself."

Jaden eventually relocated to LSI's Bremwood Residential Treatment Center in Waverly, where he reconnected with Pastor Dennis Bauer, the director of the Spiritual Life program.

"Jaden is one of the few kids who would actively set up lunch appointments with me," Pastor Dennis says. "He's really benefitted from being able to talk during the day."

Having access to a support network and a trusting relationship with Pastor Dennis has helped Jaden feel empowered to make a positive change during his time at Bremwood. Now 14, Jaden's finding his faith through music, and he's learning how to talk about his trauma and become a role model for other Iowa children in residential treatment.

Jaden has now been adopted into a loving family. As he finishes up his treatment at Bremwood, his family is there to visit and worship with him, and Jaden is enjoying being a new big brother in his family.

Warming Hearts with God's Love and a Good Pair of Mittens

Far too often, there are children who arrive at LSI's Beloit and Bremwood Residential Treatment Centers with almost nothing in their possession. And for children or youth who have been in the foster care system, it's not uncommon for them to arrive with everything they own in a single garbage bag.

We give thanks for Iowa congregations because you faithfully respond to these needs, year after year! As winter approaches, LSI relies on your loving support to meet the demands for hats, gloves, and mittens for children and youth at Beloit and Bremwood. It's important for us to give children the opportunity to shop for their favorite new winter coat. Because of that, we ask that you please not donate articles of clothing. With your generous financial donation, each child will have the simple joy of buying their new coat, knowing that they are loved and cherished.

Your church has likely received or will soon be receiving a letter inviting you to participate in LSI's hats and mittens appeal. If you would like more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI director of philanthropy and church relations, at Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org.

God's Work. Our Hands (September 9, 2017)

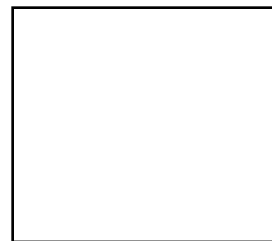


Together with our friends from the Islamic Center we collected personal hygiene and house cleaning supplies, prepared and packaged individual sack suppers which we delivered to Mission of Hope and Safe Place where we joined the residents for a picnic.



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, ELCA
610 31st St. SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403-3021

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Staff Directory

Pastor
Youth & Young Adult Minister
Pastoral Intern
Office Manager
Music Director
Piano Accompanist
Premises Keeper
Council President
eNews Editor

Rev. Dr. Ritva Williams
Mark Howland
Mikayla Kopp
Susan Hallock
David Haas
Leslie Hyland
Debbie Polk
Jeanne Towell
Marilyn Loan

pastorritva@gmail.com
mhowland1983@gmail.com
kopp.mikayla@gmail.com
office@ssluth.com
music@ssluth.com
lesliehyland@gmail.com
(319) 329-7655
thetowells@msn.com
marilyn.loan@me.com

Sunday Morning Schedule

8:00am First Worship Service
9:00am Coffee & Fellowship
9:15am Education Hour
Through August 20:
10:00am Second Worship Service
Beginning August 27:
10:30am Second Worship Service

Wednesday Evening Schedule

6:30pm Worship



**St. Stephen's
Lutheran Church, ELCA**

To Know, Live, and Share Christ.
ssluth.com • 319-364-2637

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a **Reconciling in Christ** congregation that welcomes diversity, which enriches, nurtures, and challenges our life and ministry.

***Come and join us as
we know, live, and
share Christ
together in love.***

