

SPRING 2018 • ISSUE NO. 1

ANASTASIS

ανασταση - Greek for Resurrection or Rising up.

Theme: Resurrection!



Christianity, at its core, is about Resurrection. What was dead, is brought back to life. Not just any life though - transformed, renewed, changed life. And resurrection isn't just something that we will experience sometime in the distant future. We experience it now too.

Each of the stories in this newsletter is a story of resurrection - that's what happens when Jesus encounters us. Lives are changed and what was dead is brought back to life.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church is no different. It is my hope that these stories encourage you and offer you hope. ~ Pr. Matthew

A quarterly newsletter of St. Stephen Lutheran Church

**INSIDE THIS
SPECIAL ISSUE:**

717-766-2168

**ENCOUNTERS: 2 - 7
CALL TO ACTION: 8**

www.StStephenLC.org

**WE ARE CALLED TO
PROCLAIM BOLDLY...**

e-mail: Office@StStephenLC.org
Pastor@StStephenLC.org

Encounters with Jesus

As we live out our faith daily, our eyes are opened to new possibilities, new ways to serve, and new ways to encounter Jesus - both in our lives and with those we meet.

The reality is that just outside the doors of our church there are men, women, and children who need to hear and experience a message of hope, forgiveness, and to be set free from the bondage of their past and present circumstances.

Crystal Houser shares a story about her experience of doing ministry and sharing that good news onsite at Flying J, just two miles down the road from St. Stephen Lutheran Church.

"Friday night was our first trip to the Flying J to launch a new mission to assist the homeless. I had no idea what this visit would be like. I had no idea what to expect, who we would encounter or if we would encounter anyone. What I do know is that the idea of this mission has taken over my life.

I can think of nothing else. God is calling us to action! That's all I know and because of that we are moving forward and I am confident that God will guide our steps and at some point this mission will be defined.

Friday night a group of us traveled to the Flying J, with all our donated supplies and no idea what we were doing. What we encountered was a person named Ron. Ron lives in his van and considers the Flying J his home terminal. He travels all over the country. He used to be a truck driver but became disabled after two back to back incidents on the road changed his life. One was a skid of full kegs that was not properly wrapped rolled onto him and the second was his truck went over an embankment on icy roads when a car slid into him and he jackknifed his rig. Ron receives disability and has the means to have a place, but that is not what he wants.

When we encountered Ron, he was doing his laundry. I went over to him and struck up a conversation. When it was clear that he did not need any of our supplies, I left him but invited him to join us in the other room to chat. He came over almost immediately and we all talked for 2 hours. About that time we were all getting tired so we all packed up our things and left....."



"Cookies can change the world..."

by Mike Kulikauskas

Cookies, some folks like to bake them, some folks like to eat them, and some folks like to give them away. Prudence and I participated in the 7:00 pm Christmas Eve service in December. The bagged and labeled plates of cookies, carefully assembled by the Evangelism committee, were arrayed on the tables as we entered. On our way out after worship, we gathered a half dozen or so plates and headed out into the cold night.



We stopped at a convenience store on the Pike, the night crew had just arrived to spend Christmas Eve through Christmas morning keeping the store open for the late night travelers. The young lady behind the counter looked with suspicion at this stranger approaching her with a bag in his hands. Then the plates of cookies appear and suspicion turned to surprise, as she read the attached sheet, her smile grew wider and wider. Finally, her eyes reflected the gratitude she felt as she repeatedly said thank you and Merry Christmas. As I left she was calling over her co-workers to share the treats.

Next stop the police station, Prudence, bag in hand enters. He is met with the same suspicion, then surprise. Then, instead of taking the plates through the opening in the glass partition, the officer with a huge smile, opens the door, shakes Prudence's hand and wishes him a Merry Christmas. Prudence emerges with a smile bigger than the officer's and the cookie mobile takes off again.



Stop three is the Emergency room at the local hospital As we stop near the entrance, a security guard emerges with a frown, I'm pretty sure we are going to be told to move. Prudence grabs the cookie plates and explains our mission. The frown turns to a smile and the guard, turned escort, takes Prudence inside to make the delivery. Again, smiles, handshakes and Merry Christmas fill the scene. Laughing aloud Prudence returns to the car, "This is so much fun!"

Last stop is the EMT ambulance facility. We knock on the door, inside the TV is on though no one seems about. We start looking for another entrance, when two EMT's appear. The established pattern is repeated, suspicion,

surprise, many thank you's, smiles and Merry Christmases exchanged.

In every case, the folks getting the cookies expressed their gratitude, for the cookies, yes, but also that someone remembered. We remembered and appreciated that these individuals were working on that cold, Christmas Eve night. Prudence, smiling and laughing as we drove away, remarked on how much fun it had been to give away those cookies, to interact with the people who were working, to perhaps brighten their night. Giving cookies away can change the world.

Resurrection!

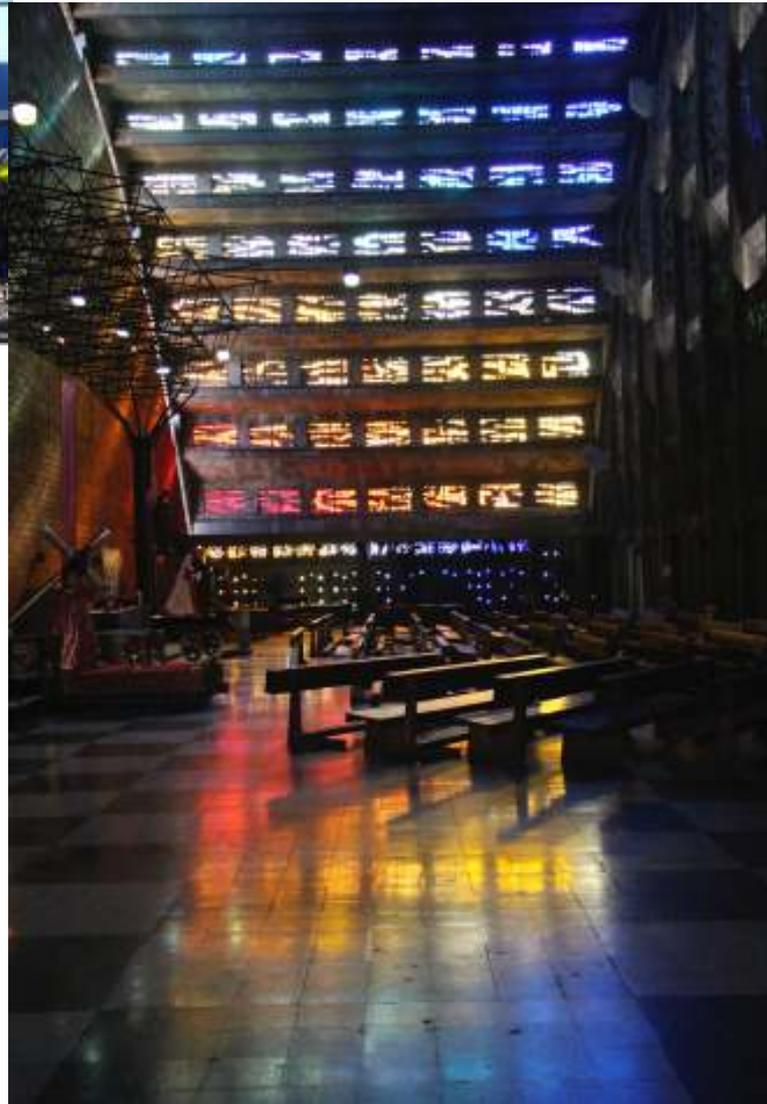
by Caroline Sheaffer
El Salvador task force

Downtown San Salvador is crowded with traffic, market stalls, and a park across from the Cathedral often filled with homeless lying on benches. A couple of blocks away is a rounded, gray, un-inviting building resembling an airport hangar or bunker. It does not beckon the stranger to come inside. It does not look like a church at all.



However, when one wanders inside the door of Iglesia El Rosario in the early morning or late afternoon light, WOW! It is a spine-tingling emotional experience.

The rainbows of light shining across the altar and the abstract, contemporary twelve stations of the cross created by sculptor Ruben Martinez add the spiritual aspect to its breathtaking delight that reaches deep into one's soul. Silent meditation and self-reflection prevail in this holy place. This sculpture is called RESURRECTION



When it was time to return to the streets of the city, somehow the homeless on those park benches begged the question - What is inside THEIR rough, dull gray exterior? What light of Resurrection do they hold? Do we walk past and ignore them or open ourselves up to find out what is inside?

Make a Difference



By Pastor Pam Illick
Trinity Lutheran, Rouzerville, PA

Do you ever wonder if anything that you do makes a difference?

Since August 18, 2016 every week between 1:00pm-3:00pm you will find me in the Subway at Walmart in Rouzerville, PA with my "Free Prayer and Conversation" sign on the table, iPad in hand, sipping on my diet caffeine free Coke, waiting. I am waiting for the Holy Spirit to make her presence known. Some days the Holy Spirit sends lots of people to talk to me, other days I wait - and I pray. I pray for the Holy Spirit to send people who are lost and/or suffering to come to see me, people who need/want prayer to stop by. I pray for the people who reply to my posting that it's Wednesday Prayer Day on Facebook and Messenger.

Some days no one comes by. And then, one day the Holy Spirit sent Bo.

We were standing in line to order food and suddenly we were talking to one another. Not just about the weather either. Rather we were talking soul to soul about life and Christmas and being alone. It was as if we had known one another far longer than the 3 or 4 minutes we stood in line.

Each of us went to our tables (they happened to be next to one another) to enjoy our lunches, but the conversation did not completely end. Bo asked questions from his heart. Questions that seemed to have festered for a long time, and on that day they burst out begging for answers.

It was as if the Holy Spirit broke down the door of his fear and called out his searching questions about Jesus and salvation. What happens to us after we die? Not only did the Holy Spirit break open Bo's door of fear, she filled me with the words that Bo needed to hear. Have you ever been baptized?

No. I could hear the emotion in his voice. Do you want to be? I invited him to talk to me whenever he was ready. I would answer his questions. I gave him my contact information and repeated my invitation. He hugged me and thanked me and went on his way.

Soon, he came back to my table and said that he wanted to talk to his wife about our conversation and that he would call.

At 6:00pm the call came. "I want to be baptized." We agreed on a meeting in 2 weeks' time. I prayed for Bo every day, my church prayed for him each time we gathered for worship and my friends on Facebook prayed for him too.

The big day arrived. I had a feeling that he wouldn't come. But, the Holy Spirit had filled him with hope and yearning and I trusted that she would bring Bo to the font. After a lot of conversation that morning, it was clear to me that Bo is a man of deep faith. He is a man who loves Jesus with his heart and soul. Bo was ready to die to his old life. God claimed Bo as a Child of God that same day. The water of baptism poured over his head mingling with tears of cleansing joy as Bo was born again into eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Do you ever wonder if anything that you do makes a difference? I don't anymore. Thank you Holy Spirit.

Seeing the face of Jesus

by Lynne Immell, Social Ministry

In May 2017 a gentleman named Mike Thomas came to St Stephen' Community meal sick, injured, hungry and homeless. He was living in his car. He sought shelter at several different venues, including our pavilion for several months and received love and kindness from many members of St Stephen.

Suggestions of services were shared with Mike, but he is a person who is used to fending for himself and fend he did. A man of many skills, including small machine/appliance repair, car reupholstering and excellent cooking, he was hired to repair a member's lawn mower.

He is a man of faith and trust in God and his Bible knowledge was shared a few times during summer academy sessions when he was able to attend. Mike was also helping another friend get clean and learn about that faith and trust.

Fast forward to October 2017. Mike received a settlement from an auto accident and was able to secure a 1 room apt locally where he can sleep, cook and shower. On a recent visit he declared to this visitor and a couple friends that "Those people at St Stephen saved his life." He repaid Social Ministry the money given to him and is in the best situation he's been in a very long time.

He is putting together a plan to start a small business where he can use his skills to earn income in spite of his disabilities. It was easy to see the face of Jesus in this big hearted man.



For more encounters with Jesus....

check us out on Facebook -

www.facebook.com/StStephenLC.org

or visit our website - www.StStephenLC.org

Faith and Finance

by Matt Schroeder, Treasurer

St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church's mission is to be a community of faith inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim boldly the Good News of God's loving and saving presence in the world.

Faith and Finance - two words that don't often go well together. After all, Finance is about facts and numbers and a good finance professional looks to the numbers to tell the story. Also, in Finance, you trust numbers and processes - as I said in my presentation at the 2017 Congregational Meeting, one of my favorite phrases at work is "trust, but verify". So yes, it would seem that Faith and Finance are two words often not used together.

And yet.....

Back in November, when we met to approve the 2018 Mission spending plan, things looked rather dire. We were looking at a general funds shortfall of \$14,803 and a shortfall to our Synod benevolence commitment of \$3,731.

Despite these numbers, we as a congregation took a leap of faith - we ratified a budget that included a position for a part time Director of Youth and Family Ministry and maintained our current level of support for the Synod. We also let you know about the opportunity to provide special contributions to help "seed" the Youth and Family Ministry Director's salary in advance.

Just two months later I am pleased to report the following:

- We ended the year with a general funds shortfall of **only \$2,063**. We were able to cover this with monies from the Reserve Fund and still have a **Reserve Fund Balance of \$28,497** moving into 2018.
- We **exceeded** our Synod Benevolence Commitment of \$25,000 by **\$392**. These contributions help the Synod with mission work, supporting existing congregations, supporting the Seminary and Camping Ministry.
- You contributed **\$9,700** toward the salary of a Director of Youth and Family Ministry, which gives us the confidence to move forward in looking to fill this important position.

If that isn't seeing faith being rewarded, I don't know what is.

Another part of our Mission Statement that strikes me is "to proclaim boldly the Good News of God's loving and saving presence in the world." Here are some of the ways in which your financial generosity helped us to do that in 2017:

- Over \$1,680 donated to Project Share to provide baby food.
- Over \$13,500 donated through Social Ministries to local families in need.
- Over \$20,000 provided to our brothers and sisters in El Salvador, for scholarships so that young people there can make a better life for themselves.
- Over \$5,000 provided to send kids and families to church camp, which, as I can personally attest to, can be a life changing ministry.
- Over \$850 for Community Meals, a ministry that provides food and fellowship in our community.

Wow - our congregation's financial generosity helped ensure that God's work was done in 2017, both in our community and around the world.

Our Mission Spending Plan for 2018 is challenging - we need an increase of **\$35,341** or about 20% in general fund donations to meet our budget. But as long as we at St. Stephen's continue to boldly proclaim the Good News of God's loving and saving presence in the world, I have faith that, with God's help, we will meet this financial challenge.



Make giving easy - Contact Kevin in the office 717-766-2168 to sign up for automatic giving. It's simple and easy and ensures that you are supporting the mission and ministry of St. Stephen.

Call to Action

Our response to Jesus encountering us

Service...

There are many opportunities to serve through our **Flying J ministry**. We need your help! We need people willing to do ministry onsite, to support the ministry in preparing supplies and reaching out to partners, and more. To learn more, please contact Pr. Matthew - 717-766-2168 or pastor@ststephenlc.org.

Come eat, hear, and share life stories with those in our community. **Dinner with Friends** - Sat. Feb. 17, Mar 17, and April 21. 5pm dinner at St. Stephen Lutheran Church. We're looking for people to come eat and to help prepare food for our guests.

Evangelism

Come to **Tapology** on the first Sunday each month at 5pm, Desperate Times Brewery, Carlisle. Come fellowship, drink beer, and talk about important issues of the day and how they intersect with faith. Recent topics have included sexual misconduct, and social media and faith

Worship

Come worship during Lent and Easter.

- Ash Wednesday - 7pm
- Mid-Week Lenten services - Wednesday in Lent, 6-7pm. Dinner church in fellowship hall
- Check out our website for up to the minute worship times for Lent and Holy Week

Education

Want to increase your commitment? Need a refresher? Come to the "new members" class each Wednesday in Lent - 7-8pm after Dinner Church. All are welcome to come learn the marks of discipleship and some of the more practical things about being a part of St. Stephen.

Join in the conversation as we dive into the Bible. We'll have "Fun with Philippians" for our Spring Bible Study. We gather at 10:30am in the church Parlor and at 7:00pm at the cafe at Wegmans on the Carlisle Pike. We'll start the Bible studies on Wednesday April 4. All are welcome and encouraged to come.

Church Service

We need your help! Saturday April 21 starting at 8:00am we'll be doing a major Spring clean up of the church and grounds. We'll be cleaning windows, working on the parking lot, and putting down tan bark. Help us be good stewards of the building and the grounds and enjoy working with other disciples.