

The Philippian

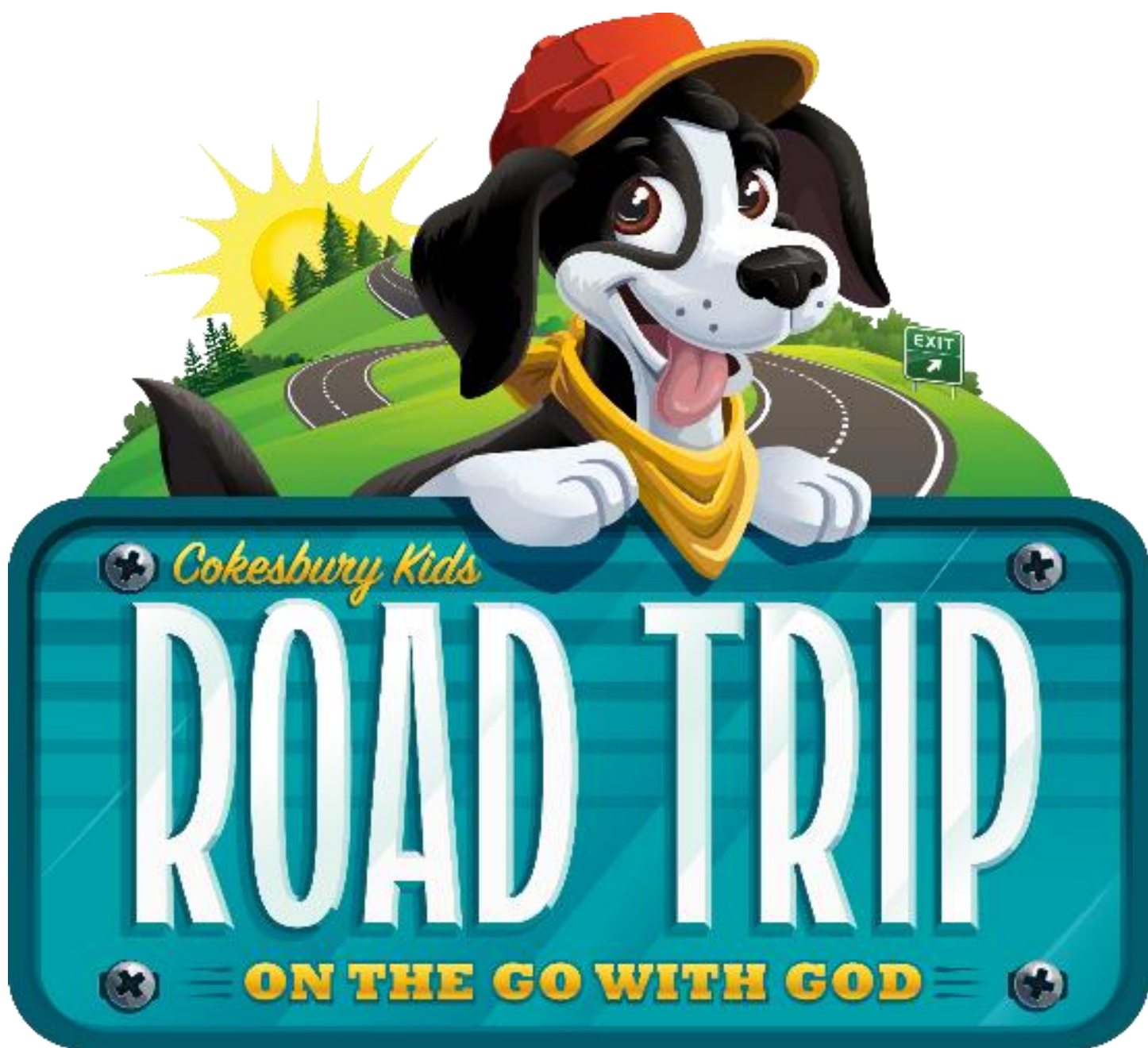
The Monthly Newsletter of St. Philip's Lutheran Church of Hastings, Minnesota

Come and Worship...Come and Serve...Come and Learn...Come as you are

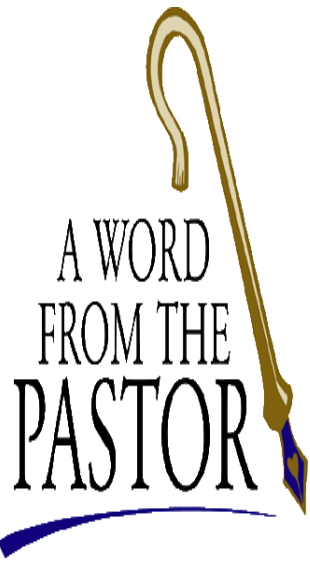
...Philip said to him, "Come and see" John 1:46

July 2026

VBS JULY 13-16, 2026



“Our citizenship is in heaven” ***Philippians 3:20***



This July, our nation marks a significant milestone: the 250th anniversary of the United States. It is an opportunity to pause and give thanks—for the freedoms many of us enjoy, for the communities we cherish, and for the generations who have worked, sacrificed, and struggled to shape this country.

As Christians, giving thanks is second nature to us. Scripture reminds us, *“Give thanks in all circumstances”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It is right to celebrate what is good: the ideals of liberty, the importance of community life, and the ongoing hope that this nation can continue striving toward justice and the common good.

And yet, as people of faith, we are also called to reflect deeply—not only to celebrate, but to discern.

Our faith encourages gratitude for the places we live and the people around us. The prophet Jeremiah writes to God’s people in exile: *“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* (Jeremiah 29:7)

Even far from home, even in imperfect circumstances, God’s people are called to invest in the well-being of their communities. That calling remains ours today.

We can give thanks for schools and neighborhoods, for public servants and volunteers, for farmers tending the land and for communities that support one another in times of need. Especially here in Minnesota, we know the quiet strength of neighbors helping neighbors. Celebrating our nation’s birthday can be part of that faithful gratitude.

At the same time, Scripture also reminds us that no human nation is the same as the kingdom of God. In Exodus, God tells the people: *“You shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples... a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.”* (Exodus 19:5–6)

Their identity comes not from political power, but from belonging to God.

And in the New Testament, Paul reminds us: *“Our citizenship is in heaven”* (Philippians 3:20). These words gently but clearly reorient us. While we belong to earthly communities, our deepest allegiance is to God.

This matters because there is a growing temptation in our culture to blur that distinction—to assume that any nation, including our own, is uniquely righteous or divinely chosen in a way that places it above critique. This is often called *Christian Nationalism*, and it can be dangerous precisely because it mixes faith with national identity in ways that distort both.

When faith is tied too tightly to national identity:

- We can lose the ability to confess where we have fallen short.
- We may overlook injustice or inequality.
- We risk confusing loyalty to God with loyalty to a political system.

But Scripture consistently calls God’s people to something deeper than national pride. The prophets spoke boldly to their own nation when it strayed from justice. Amos declares: *“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”* (Amos 5:24) Faithfulness includes both gratitude *and* accountability.

In today’s world, Christians are not called to withdraw from public life—but neither are we called to elevate any nation to the level of God’s kingdom. Instead, we are called to embody Christ’s love wherever we are.

Jesus says: *“You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others.”* (Matthew 5:14, 16) That light is not about dominance or power. It is about compassion, mercy, humility, and justice.

It looks like:

- Caring for those who are vulnerable
- Listening across differences
- Working for peace in divided times
- Telling the truth, even when it’s uncomfortable

This is how we “seek the welfare” of our communities—not by claiming perfection, but by striving, in grace, toward the common good.

So as we approach this 250th anniversary, we hold two things together: We give thanks—for the

blessings of this place and its people. And we remain grounded in our identity as God's people first.

That means we can celebrate with joy *and* speak with humility. We can honor the past *and* work for a more just future. We can love our country without confusing it with the kingdom of God.

Because ultimately, our hope is not in any nation. Our hope is in Christ. As we hear in Romans: *"God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

That love reaches across every border, every division, every human boundary.

This July, may we be a people who:

- Celebrate with gratitude
- Reflect with honesty
- Serve with compassion
- And live with our hearts firmly rooted in God's grace

Trusting that God is still at work—in this nation, in our communities, and in us.

*Your Servant in Christ,
Pastor Geier*

Sunday Scripture Readings

July 5	Zech 9:9-12 Rom 7:15-25a Matt 11:16-19, 25-30
July 12	Isaiah 55:10-13 Rom 8:1-11 Matt 13:1-9, 18-23
July 19	Isaiah 44:6-8 Rom 8:12-25 Matt 13:24-30, 36-43
July 26	1 Kings 3:5-12 Rom 8:26-39 Matt 13:31-33, 44-52

Among Our Own

Congratulations to all those celebrating their wedding anniversary in May. Listed below are couples reaching a special anniversary i.e. 1st, 5th, 10th, 15th, etc., 50+...

Al and Patty Todnem on their 62nd wedding anniversary on July 25

George and Darla Kimmes on their 53rd wedding anniversary on July 7

Dave and Diane Filkins on their 52nd wedding anniversary on July 13

Lance and Lois Twedt on their 51st wedding anniversary on July 5

Marc and Nancy Hampl on their 30TH wedding anniversary on July 20

Family of Faith Family Event

Our young families enjoyed some games and fellowship time by the playground on June 14 after the outdoor service. We had lots of fun games including parachute play, bubbles, a pool full of balls to play in, and of course use of the playground. Thank you to all who attended.



VBS ANNOUNCEMENTS

VBS is right around the corner and we are getting so excited. We have not only filled to our capacity but have a wait list. This is a true testament to the

importance of this ministry. A couple of VBS notes for church members, participants, and volunteers.

- If you are a volunteer please plan on attending one of our volunteer meetings. Meetings will be Saturday July 11 from 9:30-11:30 or Sunday July 12 from 10:45 – 12:45 (or when set up is done). We will go over songs, procedures for the week, and then get some of the decorating/set up done. If you are not a volunteer for the week but would like to help with set up that would be greatly appreciated on Sunday after church!
- Participants check your emails starting the first week in July for information coming out from the website regarding VBS information. It will come from info@myvbs.com

- Congregation, if you took donation slips off the board at church to donate supplies please return these items by July 6 so I can make sure we have enough of everything. Also, please pray for our VBS the week of July 13-16. Pray for all the families coming through the doors and all our amazing volunteers. Becky

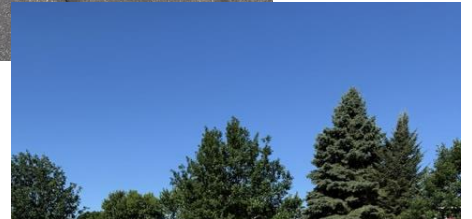
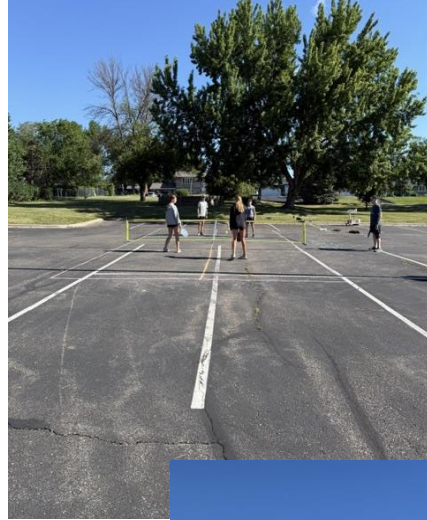
Youth Ministries Update

Youth Events in June

June 20 was a great day for St. Philip's youth! Our high school students kicked off the day with a morning of pickleball, enjoying friendly competition, plenty of laughs, and time together.

Later that evening, our middle school students gathered for a bonfire filled with games, conversation, and, of course, s'mores. It was a beautiful night to relax, connect with friends, and enjoy being together outdoors.

We are thankful for all the students and volunteers who joined us and look forward to more fun and fellowship throughout the summer!



July Youth Events: Adventure and Entertainment Await!

July is shaping up to be an exciting month for our youth! Middle school students are invited to put their skills, teamwork, and determination to the test during a grueling game of **Survivor** on **July 10 from 2:00–4:00 p.m.** Expect challenges, surprises, and plenty of friendly competition as participants battle to outwit, outplay, and outlast!

Then on **July 17**, our high school students can kick back and relax under the stars at our **Outdoor Movie Night**, beginning at **8:00 p.m.** Bring a lawn chair or blanket, grab some snacks, and enjoy a great movie with friends.

Whether you're ready for adventure or looking for a laid-back summer evening, there's something for everyone this July. We hope to see you there!

Volunteers Needed for Youth Events!

Our youth events are always more meaningful when members of our congregation join in the fun! We are looking for volunteer support for both our Middle School Survivor event on July 10 and our High School Outdoor Movie Night on July 17. For safety reasons, we must have at least two adults present at each event.

Volunteers can be as involved as they wish, whether that's helping run activities, chatting with students, serving snacks, or simply being an extra caring presence. One of the things our youth enjoy most is getting to know and work alongside different members of the congregation, and your presence helps strengthen those connections.

If you have questions about a specific event or would like to learn more about volunteering, please talk with Lydia or email her at lydiac@splchastings.org. We'd love to have you join us!

Confirmation Faith Statements

Parents of students entering 9th and 10th grades who have completed confirmation classes, it's time to begin working on Faith Statements! A Faith Statement is an opportunity for students to reflect on their faith journey, share a Bible verse that is meaningful to them, and express how God has been at work in their lives.

Students will meet with Pastor or Lydia to review their completed statement and then present it during a worship service. All Faith Statements should be presented by the end of September in preparation for Confirmation Sunday on October 25. With a large confirmation class this year, we encourage families to begin working on Faith Statements as soon as possible and to schedule a presentation date early.

If your student needs help getting started, choosing a Bible verse, or organizing their thoughts, we are happy to assist. Don't hesitate to get in touch with Lydia with any questions or to schedule your student's Faith Statement presentation.

2027 ELCA Youth Gathering

Every three years, thousands of ELCA youth and adult leaders from across the U.S. come together for the ELCA Youth Gathering. St. Philip's Youth (in grades 8-12 this fall) are invited and encouraged to attend the Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN, June 28-July 2, 2027. The 2027 theme is *Imagine More*, based on Ephesians 3:20, *to God - whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine*.

It is more than a youth event. It is an opportunity for our youth to participate in a movement to boldly live out their faith through experiential learning, inspiring speakers, worship, and intentional community activities. The youth will stay in Minneapolis, and mass gatherings will be at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Questions? Interested in attending? Check out elca.org/gathering to see the exciting plans for the gathering. Talk to Lydia and Pastor Geier for more information.

Graduation Sunday Celebration

On June 7, St. Philip's joyfully celebrated ten graduating high school seniors during our annual Graduation Sunday service. We were blessed to recognize Dakota Bauer, Ashlyn Bernt, Amelia Chandler, Lydia David, Kai Griffin, Carter Lundstrom, Linnea Ronning, Cameron Rowan, Peyton Thomas, and Emily Wormley as they marked this important milestone.

Our graduates participated in worship by serving as greeters and reading the Gospel, sharing their gifts and leadership with the congregation. We give thanks for the ways they have been part of our church family

and for the faith they have developed during their time at St. Philip's Lutheran Church.

As they begin the next chapter of their lives, we pray that God will guide, strengthen, and bless them in all their future endeavors. Congratulations, graduates!

St. Philip's Honors Ten Graduates

Ten 2026 High School graduates were present and honored on June 7. A blessing of the graduates through a responsive reading was done between the students and the congregation. Connecting the congregation to the graduates was achieved through a well done handout citing the photo, and future plans of each student. A receiving line after worship allowed all students to be congratulated by the congregation, followed by a donut reception.



Congratulations Julia Ronning

Congratulations to Julia Ronning, who earned a St. Paul Area Synod internship for the summer to Merrick Community Services. The internship program is funded by the "Planting Hope Campaign" conducted four years ago for programs such as this. Each intern is assigned to a Twin City non-profit which serves

various human needs. They gather weekly to share their observations and experiences.



2026 Garage & Plant Sale

St. Philip's 2026 Garage & Plant Sale, held on June 6, was historic in proceeds, volunteer participation, and in welcoming hundreds of shoppers to its 21st sale. Proceeds from garage sale goods and plants totaled **\$21,447** of which **\$3,731.75** represents the sale of plants. The congregation offers its humble thanks to Deborah Dreher, who was the lead coordinator and manager of the 2026 one day event. Department leads who also deserve our thanks are Geneva Weisser (Plants), Susan Cruse (Adult Clothes, Shoes & Accessories), Patty Todnem (Kitchen Essentials), Sally Anderson (Books), Chad & Natalie Carda (Electronics & Hardware), G. Schnirring & Kathy Stockman (Puzzles & Games), Arlene Wellemeyer & Lois Twedt (Children's), Al Todnem & Mary Charlson (Furniture), Vicki Pavlish (Linens & Things), Mary Rock & Jeff Lucas (Sporting Goods & Luggage), Marjorie Peterson & Bernita Weber (Jewelry), Jan Kochendorfer & Pat Schultz (Home Decor), and Dara Pemble (Crafts). Daily attention to deliveries, moving fixtures and supplies, refuse coordination, and box collection were Bill Pavlish, Steve Wolverton, Ron Toppin, Bob Cruse and Bob Wellemeyer. Dolores Pemble handled Cash Management. Fifty-five volunteers worked for four successive days to handle each item, price it, and display it attractively. Delicious lunches and treats were provided by fellow members.



Deborah Dreher was the sale's lead coordinator and manager, giving expert attention to all its details.



Marking, hanging, and walking each piece to its rack takes six or more each day. We see Eunice, Danna, Gladys, Deb, Sharon, and Margaret(partial showing) Not pictured was Cindy T who does shoes.



Building enthusiasm to the congregation sometimes took humor, which is being offered by Vicki Pavlish and Bruce Arndtson during a Sunday worship service.



Mary Rock and Terry Kochendorfer helping with Sunday's set up bringing shelving to the linens department.



Eleanor and Mackenzie worked as a team to bring in hanging racks.



Emily Preston, a major player in "set up:" which takes trucks, trailers and at least 25 people.



Patty, with her pail of soapy water, making all merchandise look its best.



Pastor Geier and Amy provided a baked potato buffet for 62 workers on Tuesday of the sales' prep week.



Natalie is showing off garden art in plants, which contributed 16% of total proceeds.



Noon lunches and snacks are provided by members. Pam and her cousin Jackie provided this colorful display of shredded pork, cole slaw and beans.

Outdoor Worship, A Summer Favorite

A St. Philip's congregation of 146, gathered on June 14, for its annual outdoor worship experience. "The Double Down Dare Devils" provided gathering music and closing music, plus supported the worship service hymns with their instruments. Pastor Geier's service of a soaring sky overhead, accented with eagles wings, reminded us of our walk with God outside the walls of our beloved sanctuary. Pastor Geier provided a meaningful message about our responsibility to go

into the world as Jesus commanded His disciples to do.



POSITION AVAILABLE

Director of Children's Choir - The Director of Children's Choir is a person dedicated to the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and committed to the mission and vision of St. Philip's Lutheran Church. This position works with pastor, and the Worship and Music Ministry Team planning and preparing Children's music for worship services. This is a part time position working up to 5 hours per week. We are looking for a person with choral music background and who loves working with children. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Geier or submit your resume' to him at: pastorgeier@splchastings.org.

The Fourth of July Parade is Coming!

The Fourth of July Parade will be coming past St. Philip's again this year. St. Philip's would like to have an outreach providing free bottles of water on our front lawn. If



you are going to be around on the 4th, could you help with this community event? Watch for the sign up on the kiosk as we celebrate our country's 250th Birthday! Questions? Fellowship Ministry, Camille Nelson



Campfire Conversations Coming This Summer! "Sabbath as a Source for an Abundant Life!"

In June we talked about how Sabbath was something that God did and does for us rather than something we "have to" do for God. On July 19th we will continue reflecting on the gift of Sabbath. This time we will look at how Sabbath is all about seeing our God as a liberator who frees and blesses us and how the theme of justice for the oppressed is woven into the very heart of Sabbath.

So come bring a chair and join our time of guided conversation, Bible study, and fellowship around our campfire ring. (If it is raining or over 90 degrees, we will plan to move inside.) We will meet from 6:30-7:30.

Each conversation is independent of the others, so if you can only make it to one, we'd love to see you. Or if you need to leave early or arrive late, that's okay too!

July 19 at 6:30 – SABBATH: GOD'S GRACIOUS INTRUSION AND THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE

August 16 at 6:30 – SABBATH: GOD'S SUFFICIENCY AND OUR GENEROSITY

Thank You to Our Altar Guild

Thank you Altar Guild members: Trish Bremer, Melissa Campbell, Margaret Cox, Deborah Dreher, Danna Elling-Schultz, Judy Liffbrig, Becky Raimann, Glenda Schnirring, Virginia Spence, Barb Taffe, Patty Todnem, Arlene Wellemeyer, Lois Wroge. You are doing an excellent job for St. Philip's Church! We appreciate your time and effort for taking care of our altar.

Lutheran World Relief School Supply Drive

It's hard to believe, but the Back to School displays will be up in the stores soon and that means it is time to start collecting supplies for the Lutheran World Relief School Kits. We will be packing them on Rally Sunday, September 13! Each kit needs:

FOUR spiral notebooks of 70 pages of EITHER wide or narrow ruled paper

ONE pair blunt children's scissors

ONE 2.5" pink eraser

ONE box 16 or 24 crayons, (Crayola brand is recommended as they handle the heat better than most other brands)

FIVE blue or black ball point pens (no gel ink!!!)

ONE 30-centimeter ruler (with inches on one side, but they must have centimeters on the other!)

ONE pencil sharpener with shavings catcher

FIVE UNSHARPENED #2 pencils with erasers

If you would prefer that we shop for you, donation envelopes are in a plastic sleeve on the kiosk. Envelopes should be placed in the lock box outside the multipurpose room. We filled 303 bags last year and have ordered 400 pre-made bags this year with a Thrivent grant and donations. Can we fill them all? Extra lists are on the Welcome Center. Questions, please contact Jan Kochendorfer.

It's "Faith Statement" Season

Sister / brother team Sofia and Micah Villavicencio set a high bar as the first two confirmands declared their faith statements on May 17. Micah went first stating his Bible verse from the book of Micah. He expressed his readiness to be accountable to whom he aspires to be and that when making the big decisions in life he will have his verse from Micah to rely on. While Sofia preferred to provide a lighter side of herself with humor, the family closeness and respect these two teens have is the result of some very effective home and church nurturing. Both cited their good

experiences with their mentors Gerri Lundby and Raul Jackson coupled with Dave Tank who shares his music interest with Micah. Both of these young people are Sunday School aids to two classes, they acolyte often and attend worship nearly every Sunday. They feel the support of their St. Philip's congregation which we must all pledge to live up to.



Spring Grounds Grooming

Twenty volunteers responded to the call to help groom the grounds on May 10. Some members had done assigned areas in advance. St. Philip's is on 5.7 acres of land which needs constant beautification. As our house of worship is on a primary location, its appearance extends a statement as to who we are as stewards of God's land and property. Two loads of mulch were brought in by Bruce Arndtson which was spread by volunteers after weeding. The west rain basin had its decorative grasses cut down and weeded.



Robyn Tank and Trish Bremer spread new mulch on the front of the sanctuary.



Vicki Pavlish is hauling mulch to the NW shaded area by where the plant sale is conducted.



Bruce Arndtson and Dave Tank stayed until all spots that needed mulch got it.

Food Rescue at Hastings Family Service - Sign up Genius Changes!

Hello volunteers!

Emails will now be coming from Cindy Toppin instead of info@splchastings.org. If you wish to be on the distribution list, contact Cindy at 651-353-7143 or ctoppin409@gmail.com. If you have previously been getting the sign up genius emails, you will continue to do so. You do not need to do anything. If you have any trouble signing up, just contact me and I can sign you up.

What is Food Rescue? Food comes in from 3 grocery stores and is sorted to ensure that it is not outdated. Volunteers sort and organize by date to distribute to neighbors in need. Four volunteers are needed at each Monday session. It generally takes 2 hours from 10 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the second, third and fourth Mondays of the month. There is always a coffee break in the middle of your shift. Come join the fun!! New volunteers over the age of 18 are always welcome!!!!

GIVING AND EXPENSE	
2026	2025
May 2026 YTD General & Misc Giving	
\$214,920.54	\$207,530.58
May 2026 YTD Capital Fund	
\$112,287.06	\$68,151.38
May 2026 YTD Expenses	
\$279,061.72	\$301,973.40
Net	
\$48,145.88	\$(26,291.44)
May 2026 YTD Mortgage Principal Rqrd.	
\$41,846.86	\$40,944.90

ST. PHILIP'S STAFF*Gregory Geier, Pastor*pastorgeier@splchastings.org*Noreen Swanson, Organist*swansonhastings@centurylink.net*LuAnn Roiger, Handbell Choir Director*lroiger58@gmail.com*Meg Rein, Director of Contemporary Worship*meganr@splchastings.org*John Diischer, Sound Board Technician*johnd@splchastings.org*Becky Kaphing, Director of Children's Ministries*beckyk@splchastings.org*Lydia Cummings, Director of Youth Ministries*lydiac@splchastings.org*Dawn Owen, Office Administrator*dawno@splchastings.org*Becky Kaphing, Preschool Co-Director*preschool@splchastings.org*Lorelei Rein, Preschool Co-Director*preschool@splchastings.org*Kari Vortherms, Assistant Teacher*preschool@splchastings.org**ST. PHILIP'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
AND PRESCHOOL**

1401 West 15th Street, Hastings, Minnesota

651-437-6541 www.splchastings.org**Church Office Hours:**

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Friday: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Sunday Worship Service:

In Person and Livestream Worship at 9:30 am

(Livestream link on www.splchastings.org,

YouTube and Facebook)

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