

St. Philip's Lutheran Church Member Information and Policies

Your Membership In Christ's Flock At St. Philip's

We encourage you from the very beginning to find ways to be regularly involved in the life of our congregation. This includes not only involvement in worship and ongoing Christian education, but also in the areas of fellowship and service. Your ties to your fellow believers here at St. Philip's help to strengthen your ties to your Savior and His Word. They are also part of our witness to our community. Our Savior wants others to see how much we love one another.

We hope that you come to St. Philip's with high expectations of our ministry. We also remind you that by Christ's call to faith, **YOU** are the church. What gifts and abilities has the Lord given to you? How can you use them to His glory by your membership with us? Please contact the pastor. He can answer whatever questions you may have.

Our Organization

St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation looks to God's Word to set its goals and direct its activities. However, in all matters in which the Scriptures have not given specific guidelines, the congregation determines how to carry on its ministry in an orderly way.

To minister effectively as a congregation, St. Philip's elects leaders who are responsible for carrying out the congregation's mission and goals. Overseeing that work is the **Church Council**. The Church Council is comprised of the president, recording secretary, treasurer, synod contact man and each of the board chairmen. The pastor and principal are non-voting members of the council.

The **Board of Elders** assists the pastor in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the congregation and school, with special concern for the proclamation of the Word and the spiritual welfare of the members and leaders of the congregation and school. Major responsibilities include worship and the visitation of members. By requesting membership in our congregation, you are asking these spiritual leaders to be concerned about your spiritual welfare. You are asking them to be concerned about your involvement in the worship life of St. Philip's and visit you if you are absent from worship and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The **Board of Finance** is responsible for the counting of contributions and the proper preparation of bank deposits.

The **Board of Evangelism** is responsible for developing and maintaining outreach awareness in our congregation and school. This board provides training, resources and opportunities for

sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know Him.

The **Board of Education** is responsible for the nurturing of St. Philip's children in our Lutheran Elementary School. It oversees the work of our principal and faculty. This board also encourages the congregation in its work with Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Luther Preparatory School, The Hope School, Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Wisconsin Lutheran College.

The **Board of Maintenance** is charged with the care of the congregation's property. They will see to it that all of our facilities are in a condition that gives proper glory and respect to God.

The **Board of Stewardship**. This board is responsible for encouraging each member of the congregation to make faithful use of the time, talents and treasures which God has given to us.

The following sub-committees currently assist the church council and boards in their work:

The Men's Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for the men of our congregation who are 18 years old and older.

The Ladies' Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for the women of our congregation who are 18 years old and older.

The Singles' Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for the single men and women of our congregation who are 18 years old and older.

The High School Youth Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for the young men and women (grades 9th – 12th) of our congregation.

The Called-Worker Care Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for the pastor, staff-minister/principal, teachers and their families.

The Fellowship Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for all members of our congregation.

The Altar Guild Ministry: responsible for the altar, pulpit and lectern paraments. The Altar Guild is also responsible for communion preparation and clean-up.

The Church Anniversary Ministry: preparing for our congregation's 50th anniversary.

The Ushers' Board Ministry: responsible for assisting the pastor and congregational leaders in making certain that the worship service is conducted in a decent and orderly manner.

The Gospel Choir Ministry: responsible for choosing and singing music that glorifies God and strengthens the congregation in the message of law and gospel.

The Anthem Choir Ministry: responsible for choosing and singing music that glorifies God and strengthens the congregation in the message of law and gospel.

The Kitchen Ministry: responsible for supplying the kitchen supply room. Anyone using the kitchen should be in contact with this committee.

The Worship Ministry: responsible for all things having to do with our worship services.

The Christian Education and Discipleship Ministry: responsible for all things having to do with bible study and spiritual growth and nurturing in our congregation.

The Sick and Shut-In Ministry: spiritual growth, fellowship and encouragement for those members of our congregation who are unable to attend worship services.

The Funeral Ministry: responsible for assisting the pastor and board of elders in providing comfort to the bereaved family.

The Assimilation Ministry: responsible for assisting the board of stewardship in the task of helping every member to feel welcome, needed and connected to the congregation's vision.

Activities within Our Church/School Facilities or In The Name Of Our Church/School

Everything that we do as a congregation and as individual Christians is to be done to the glory and honor of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is also to be done in consideration for the fellowship of believers of which we are a part (St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran).

Whenever an activity takes place here in our building (church/school) or in the name of our church/school/synod, biblical fellowship principals must be observed. If prayers or any activity that will be perceived as worship is to take place, ordinarily those who are leading and taking part in the activity will be of our fellowship (the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod).

Whenever our church facilities are used by someone, those using them have the responsibility for set-up and clean-up. The church is not responsible for personal items lost, stolen or broken while using our facilities.

The Lord's Supper

Our Lord has given his church a special meal called the Lord's Supper. We wish to treat this special meal with great care for it is meant to assure us of Christ's forgiveness, strengthen our faith and increase our power to serve Him.

The Lord's Supper is celebrated on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. We also offer the sacrament on other worship occasions such as Maundy Thursday and New Year's Day.

Guests who are not members of St. Philip's or of any other Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (our sister Synod) congregation are asked to refrain from partaking of the Lord's Supper. These guests are cordially invited to speak with the pastor and get an understanding of the teachings of our church through a Bible Information Class before partaking of the Lord's Supper at St. Philip's.

Guests who are members of other Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (our sister Synod) congregations are to announce their desire for and their intentions to partake of the Lord's Supper to the pastor before the service. Each communicant has confessed that their faith in Jesus is the same as that of all St. Philip's members and that they know about the proper partaking of the Lord's body and blood in the sacrament.

If you have any questions about those who are being allowed or not being allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper, the proper, biblical and constitutional procedure is to contact the pastor. If it does not breach confidentiality, the pastor may be able to answer your questions.

In line with Scripture, our church policies state that as long as a couple is living together without being married, they are not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. Repentance needs to take place first.

For the elders to monitor participation in Communion, they request that all communicants **register for communion**. This can be done by indicating your attendance on the cards which are found in the worship service bulletin.

Private communion is available for those who cannot attend on Sundays. Those who cannot get to church because of transportation problems are urged to let their needs be known to the pastor or elders. Shut-ins are visited on a regular basis or are brought to church as frequently as transportation can be arranged and as health allows.

Baptisms

Parents should notify the pastor when their child is born and make arrangements to have their child baptized as soon as possible, certainly within a month to six weeks of their child's birth. A baptism may be performed during a regular service or privately at the hospital, in church or at home. Baptisms are scheduled with the pastor.

In the very early Christian church Christian parents began to ask believing friends to serve as **godparents** for their children. As a child's godparent, a Christian assumed some special spiritual responsibility for that child, actively assisting in his spiritual growth. If the child lost his parents, the godparent also assumed responsibility for the child's physical care.

Today godparents normally serve a less formal function. They are not morally or legally bound to care for a child's physical needs if his parents die. In fact, sometimes parents use godparents only as an honorary position. A favorite relative or friend may be asked to witness the baptism even though that friend does not share the same Christian faith or perhaps any faith. These godparents are also called witnesses, since they can later bear witness to the child that it was baptized.

Sometimes Christians do wish their child's godparents to serve in a more active, spiritual way in their child's life. These godparents are also called sponsors. Sponsors promise to assist the child's parents in the spiritual upbringing of that child and to care for the spiritual raising of that child if its parents would die. For that reason sponsors must be Christians who share the same faith as the church where the child is baptized.

Since your selection of sponsors will not necessarily be recognized by the government in case of your death, you may wish to express your concern for your children's future spiritual education directly in your will.

Weddings

Members of our church are encouraged to have their marriage performed in our church in order to ask God's blessing upon such an important step in their lives. Ordinarily either the bride or the groom must be a member to have this privilege.

Being married in a church before the Lord's altar makes a wedding service a worship service. The central person at a church wedding is not the bride or the groom, but the Lord. Every part of the worship service (the music, the hymns, the readings, the prayers, and the vows) should glorify God first and foremost. For example, solos should be picked which highlight God's love for us rather than the wedding couple's love for each other.

Since a church wedding is a worship service, the people involved in leading that worship service (the pastor, organist, soloists, etc.) should share the same beliefs in God as this congregation professes, that is, be a member in good standing of a WELS or ELS congregation. That is part of a Christian congregation's proclamation that it knows the truth about the God it worships. Members of the wedding party do not need to be WELS members since they are there to participate in and witness the wedding but not lead in worship.

The pastor is more than happy to assist St. Philip's members in their wedding planning. This is normally a part of the marriage-counseling program, which the pastor carries out prior to a wedding. Also, as the church appointed worship leader, the pastor is the key component in determining the format of the wedding service. All plans for this worship service will be shared with the pastor and approved by him. The pastor, as our congregation's designated worship leader, will be the final authority on the structure of each wedding service. The pastor will, however, consult the board of elders for advice and suggestions as needed.

Those wishing to be married at St. Philip's will participate in a program of **pre-marital counseling** led by the pastor. The program usually involves at least 2-5 hours of counseling and should be initiated at least six weeks before the wedding.

Some Couples are in a situation where they are **living together before getting married**. If such a couple would be member(s) of our church, then out of love and Christian responsibility, that couple should be brought to a biblical understanding of what marriage is and what God's will is for their lives. Through the study of Holy Scripture and Christian encouragement and admonition, that couple will understand the need to either get married right away (simple ceremony by pastor or the Justice of the peace), or immediately stop living together. Such a couple could get married right away and then, at a later date, have a **reaffirmation of vows service** in the church.

The wedding couple will inform their families, friends and the **photographer**, that *flash pictures may not be taken during the ceremony* since it disturbs the worshipful atmosphere. However, they can be taken during the wedding procession and recession. Pictures of the wedding ceremony proper can be taken either before or after the wedding by recreating the scene.

The worship service may be **videotaped** from any place in the church where the worship atmosphere will not be disturbed.

The church gymnasium is available for **wedding receptions** as long as the date for the reception is not in conflict with any already planned church or school activity. No alcoholic beverages may be used at any function on church property.

Funerals

The church facilities are always available for the funeral services of its members. Families may also decide to hold a funeral service at a funeral home. Prior to the funeral, the family will meet with the pastor to plan the service. A funeral for a Christian is a worship service: a time to focus on God and his love for us in Jesus. Whether a funeral is held at church or at a funeral home will not alter the basic elements and principles of worship services. Our services reflect the comfort of God's Word and the joy and blessing of eternal life rather than the sorrow of departure or a eulogy of the deceased's earthly life.

If the body is viewed at the church, the casket is usually closed just before the service begins. At that time, ordinarily, the immediate family will be gathered for a brief prayer.

An **organist** is always provided by St. Philip's through the pastor. A **soloist** or **choir** is optional, but if used, should be Wisconsin Synod members.

We usually do not conduct funerals for non-members unless they have publicly confessed their Christian faith to the pastor through his visits with them. Also, if a person in a Bible Information Class were to die before completing it, the pastor may perform the funeral service. The pastor and board of elders will make the decision concerning funeral services based upon Scriptural and Church guidelines.

Memorials given to the church will generally be acknowledged in the church bulletin. Suggestions for memorial designations are available from the pastor or congregation president. We also encourage our members to plan to honor their Lord as they make out their wills, remembering the work of our congregation and synod. The services of our Synod's Gift Planning Counselors are available for this purpose.