

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT



February 22, 2026

10 a.m.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

(850) 385-2728, Office

sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com, Email

<http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com>

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

Katharine Gossman, Music Director

Rita Ford, Office Manager

All Members, Ministers

Welcome, Everyone!

We are glad to have you with us this morning. If you need assistance in finding anything, one of our ushers will be glad to help you.

Restrooms are found in the fellowship hall and office building to the right as you exit the sanctuary. Proceed up the stairs and through the glass door. Unisex bathrooms are available through the kitchen in the office area.

“Let the Little Children Come” Matthew 19:14 - In accordance with St. Stephen’s mission “to be a welcoming community . . .” we encourage all ages to worship on Sundays. We also believe that children learn to welcome others by how they have been welcomed. If you are a parent of a young child, know that this community supports your efforts to engage your child in worship and understands that it can be a stressful process. Having children in worship is a joy that we treasure, so please know that we welcome you and your children as they learn to become active members in Christ’s body.

Please remember to turn off your cell phone during the liturgy.

All the hymns for the worship service are in the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship book and numbered by hymn, not page.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation that explicitly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. St. Stephen is equally committed to anti-racism. We welcome people without regard to race, ethnicity, age, family status, economic status, or differing abilities.

All are invited to receive the sacrament. Lutherans believe that Jesus Christ is present in, with and under the consecrated bread and wine of Holy Communion. Those not wishing to commune are welcome to the altar to receive a blessing. To indicate this, please cross your arms over your chest. If you are not able to come forward, please inform the ushers and the meal will be brought to you.

INTRODUCTION

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



+ GATHERING +

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

C **Amen.**

P Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

Silence for reflection.

P Gracious God,

C **have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

P For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

C **have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

P For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

C **have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

P For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

C have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdaining the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

C have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

C have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

C Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 319 *O LORD, THROUGHOUT THESE FORTY DAYS* ➡

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 319 O LORD, THROUGHOUT THESE FORTY DAYS

1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you
 2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your
 3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and
 4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and

prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance
 faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your
 fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -
 all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal

for our sin, and free us from our past.
 skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.
 ny our - selves that we may know God's love.
 Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838-1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930
 Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816; arr. Theodore A. Beck, 1929-2003
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

KYRIE



A Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **C** Lord, have mer - cy.
Lord, have mer - cy:



A Chri - ste e - le - i - son: **C** Christ, have mer - cy.
Christ, have mer - cy:



A Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **C** Lord, have mer - cy.
Lord, have mer - cy:



PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray.

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."^{3:1} Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die, ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Romans 5:12-19

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

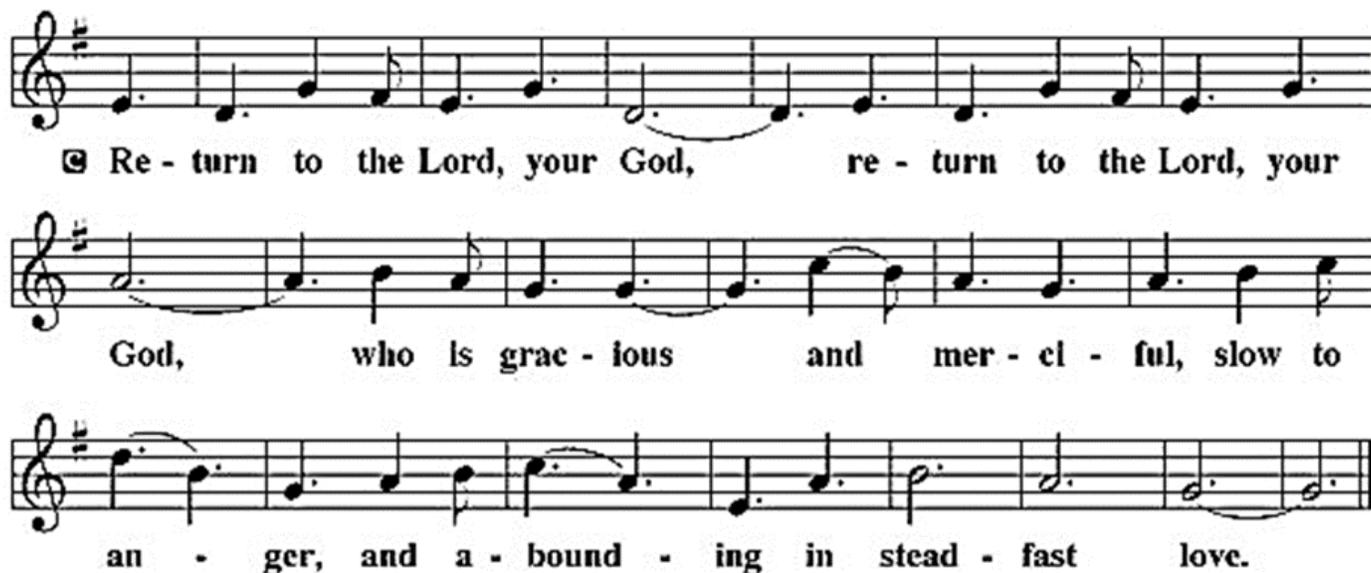
¹²Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ¹³for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, re - turn to the Lord, your
God, who is grac - ious and mer - ci - ful, slow to
an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one

P The holy gospel according to Matthew, the fourth chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”⁴ But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, ⁹ and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

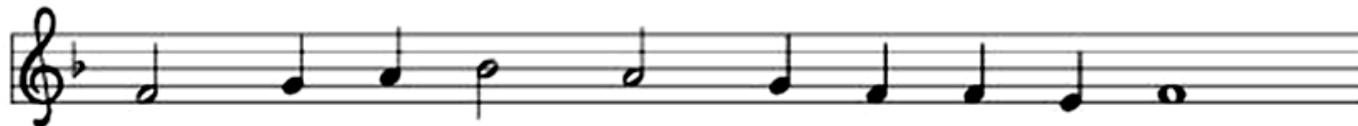
SERMON *We encounter the living word of God in the preaching.*

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 321 ETERNAL LORD of LOVE, BEHOLD YOUR CHURCH



HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 321 ETERNAL LORD of LOVE, BEHOLD YOUR CHURCH



1 E - ter - nal Lord of love, be - hold your church
2 So dai - ly dy - ing to the way of self,
3 If dead in you, so in you we a - rise,



walk - ing once more the pil - grim way of Lent,
so dai - ly liv - ing in your way of love,
you the first - born of all the faith - ful dead;



led by your cloud by day, by night your fire,
we walk the road, Lord Je - sus, that you trod,
and as through ston - y ground the green shoots break,



moved by your love and toward your pres - ence bent:
know - ing our - selves bap - tized in - to your death:
glo - rious in spring - time dress of leaf and flow'r,



far off yet here— the goal of all de - sire.
so we are dead and live with you in God.
so in - to life and glo - ry shall we wake.

Text: Thomas H. Cain, 1931–2003

Music: OLD 124TH. *Trente quatre pseumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

Text © Thomas H. Cain. Used by permission of estate.

APOSTLES' CREED

A Let us confess our faith.

C I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Each petition ends: Hear us, O God.

Congregational response: Your mercy is great.

PEACE

A The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

We greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

The assembly is seated.



+ MEAL +

Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint



venmo

Use this QR Code to connect to Venmo for a donation to St. Stephen. Code 5469.

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including caring for those in need. We welcome you to place your gift in the offering plate near the baptismal font, mail it to the church, or by using the VENMO QR Code to the right.

ANTHEM *"Be With Me, Lord" -Macek/ arr. Tate*

(Refrain)

Be with me, Lord,
Be with me when I am in need.

Those who dwell in the sheltering power of the Most High
and abide in the shade of God almighty
need not fear the night's terror, nor the weapon fired by day;
not the plague that prowls in darkness; not the violence that strikes at noon. (refrain)

Thousands falling at your side, but for you, death must wait,
for God's truth is your armor and shield.
For you have only to look: see how the wicked are repaid,
you who make of the Most High your home! (refrain)

Evil shall not befall you, no plague approach where you dwell,
for to angels God entrusts all your ways.
They shall bear you high upon their hands lest you strike your foot against a stone;
on the lion and the viper you shall tread. (refrain)

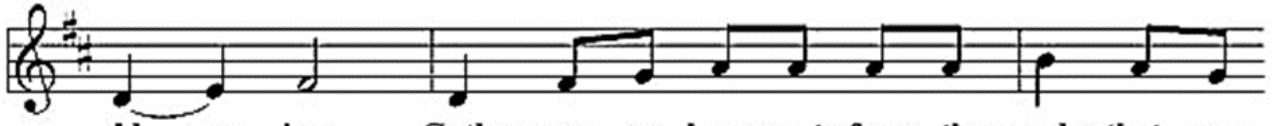
Set your love on me to save you, protect you for you know my name.
When you call, I shall answer "I am with you".
I will save you from all distress, give you glory evermore.
With long life my love will content you. (refrain)

OFFERING HYMN

The assembly stands to sing the offering hymn as the collection and the gifts are brought forward.



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were



sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.



Gath - er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we



of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,



Lord, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

© Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the
high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy". It consists of five staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (F major), and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and". The second staff continues: "might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.". The third staff: "Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who". The fourth staff: "comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the". The fifth staff: "high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est." The score ends with a double bar line.

The presiding minister continues to give thanks.

P In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread,
and gave thanks; broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying: Take and eat;
this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

C **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray.

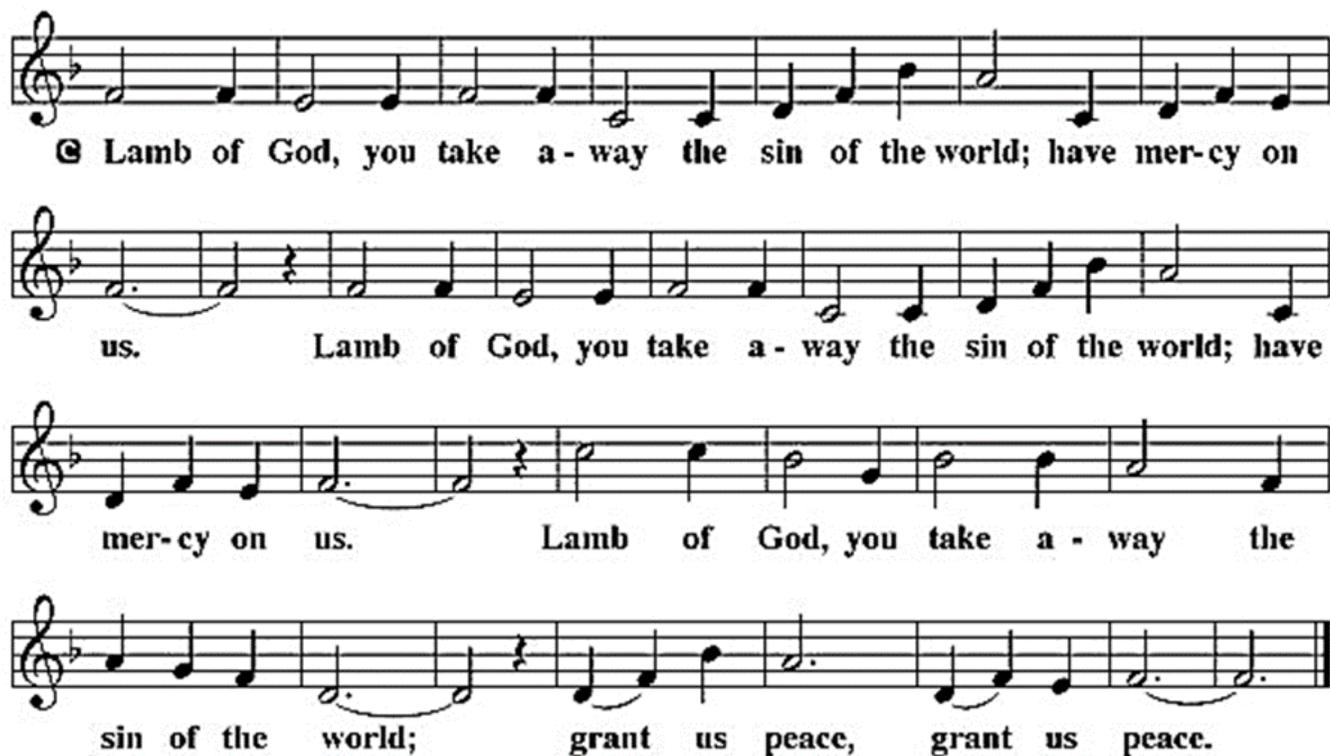
C **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

The assembly is seated.

LAMB OF GOD



♩ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

As the ushers direct you, come to the altar using the side aisles and return to your seat via the central aisle. The assisting ministers offer both wine and grape juice from pouring cups; take a communion glass from the tray as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the lower level of the rail. Wheat-free wafers are available— simply tell the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS

ELW 325 *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*

ELW 613 *Thy Holy Wings*

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

+ SENDING +

BLESSING *We receive the blessings of the triune God.*

P Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, ✠ bless you now and always.

C Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW 326 *BLESS NOW, O GOD, the JOURNEY*



DISMISSAL

A We believe out loud that God's mission for us is:

C to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.

A Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C **Thanks be to God!**

+ + +

*Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416
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1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
 2 Bless so - journ - ers and pil - grims who share this wind - ing way;
 3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.

the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
 your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus - tains the day.
 We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,

The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun - tain round,
 We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
 but wait - ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.

then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
 to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
 Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993
 Music: LLANGLOFFAN, Welsh tune, 19th cent.
 Text © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638, www.giamusic.com, 800.442.3358.
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SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Jordi Banitt, Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Olivia James, Lawana Lamb-Daniels, Sandy Ness, Simone Schuster, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Serving	February 22	March 1
Assisting Minister	Jen Dritt	Rob Schiffer
Cup Minister	Susan Warren	Kirsten Ebbesen
Cantor	Cassandra White	Susan Hehn
Lector	Karen Olson	Stephanie Leitch
Acolyte		
Tech Team	Mark Greeley Ben Bush	Loraine Sundberg Audrey Post
Ushers	Bob Eshleman Colin Hackley	Bob Eshleman Patrick Kennell
Altar Guild	Rita Ford Susan Warren	Beth Alexander
Counters	Janet Barber Patricia Handschy	Susan Warren Margaret Bowers

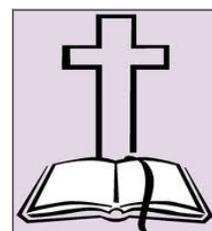
Next Sunday's Readings, Second Sunday in Lent:

[Genesis 12:1-4a](#)

[Psalm 121](#)

[Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#)

[John 3:1-17](#)



PRAYER REQUESTS

For the sick: Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White); Laura McDuffie (sister of Rob Schiffer).

In treatment for cancer: Ruth Hartung; Scott Simmons (son of Sharon Simmons); Gordon Fleischer; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; Linda Bobbitt, (friend of Cheryl Stuart) diagnosed with metastasized breast cancer.; David McManus (friend of Audrey Post); Shannon Miller (friend of Barb O'Donnell); Wayne Harrison (Jan Harrison's son); Pat Yeager (sister of Sue Canning).

Health and protection: For Frank "Ramy" Meyers following broken leg. For those encountering fear & uncertainty around government cuts and the future of Medicaid. For immigrants and refugees who are working and raising families in the United States to be safe and secure without unnecessary deportations.

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: For Jeanette Sickel and family following the death of her cousin, Elaine Harris; Rick Bobbitt (friend of Cheryl Stuart), our shared sympathy on his death; For Sharon Simmons and family following the death of her sister, Sue Berent; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Allana Lochan-Tekaram (sister of Anita Sawh and Rita Ford), for hormone imbalance; Walt Steinvorth (friend of Rob Schiffer), suffering from pericarditis and vestibular neuritis and learning to cope with dizziness and severe equilibrium problems; For Karen Olson.

Church concerns: St. Stephen's Church Council; the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council; all congregations searching for ways to stay connected and proclaim the Good News; Reconciling Works; Bishops Pedro Suarez and Yehiel Curry; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA Advocacy offices and ministry.

World concerns: For all people suffering and/or recovering from hurricanes; migrants and asylum seekers; civil rights for people around the world; a ceasefire in Ethiopia and in Ukraine; peace in Gaza and the Middle East.

Calendar for February 22 - March 1

Feb.	22	Sun.	9 am	Bible study
			9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
			10 am	Worship, First Sunday in Lent
			11:30 am	Council meeting
Feb.	25	Wed.	7 pm	Choir rehearsal
Feb.	26	Thurs.	10 am	Bible study
Mar .	01	Sun.	9 am	Bible study
			9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
			10 am	Worship, Second Sunday in Lent

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FLOWER CHART FOR 2026: Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you would like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service by signing up for the 2026 Flower Chart located on the sidewalk near the narthex. The cost is \$40, and you can place it in the offering plate.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: Want to read a sermon you missed? Visit <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to read the latest newsletters? Go to <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to browse a collection of St. Stephen songs? They're at <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>.

CHURCH COUNCIL	
President, Denise Bookwalter	
Treasurer, Jennifer Dritt	Buildings Coordinator, Sandy Lamb-Daniels
Worship & Music, Susan Hehn	Grounds Coordinator, Rob Schiffer
Care & Hospitality, Lawana Lamb-Daniels	Outreach, Sharon Simmons
Mutual Ministry, Sylvia Smith	Education & Discipleship, Emily Stover
Communications, Audrey Post	Youth, Graham Reece