

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS



DECEMBER 28, 2025

10 A.M.

WE WELCOME OLIVIA AHYOUNG, GUEST MUSICIAN.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
(850) 385-2728, Office
sslc@ststephenlutherantly.com, Email
<http://www.ststephenlutherantly.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. Please do not leave children under 12 unattended.

“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. A nursery is available if parent or guardian desires. See usher for details.

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.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Stand as you are able.

GATHERING CAROL ELW 269 *Once in Royal David's City*

1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2 He came down to earth from heav-en who is God and Lord of all,
3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem-ing love;
4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand-ing by,

where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - cle was a stall;
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove;
we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;

Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.
there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.

DIALOGUE

Leader The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

C The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

A Those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

C We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

A To us a child is born, to us a son is given.

C In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.



OPENING PRAYER

P Let us pray.

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of Stephen the first martyr, who looked to heaven and prayed for his persecutors. Grant that we also may pray for our enemies and seek forgiveness for those who hurt us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C AMEN.

Remain seated for the lessons and carols.



+ WORD +

FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:2-7 Karen Olson

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL

ELW 272

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom-ing from ten - der stem hath
 2 I - sai - ah had fore - told it, the rose I have in
 3 This flow'r, whose fra - grant-ness ten - der with sweet-ness fills the
 4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man

1 sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing as
 mind; with Mar - y we be - hold it, the
 air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor the
 woe; O Sav - ior, king of glo - ry, who

1 seers of old have sung, it came, a flow'r so bright, a -
 vir - gin moth - er kind. To show God's love a - right, she
 dark-ness ev - 'ry - where. True man, yet ver - y God, from
 dost our weak - ness know: bring us at length, we pray, to

1 mid the cold of win - ter, when half - spent was the night.
 bore to us a Sav - ior, when half - spent was the night,
 sin and death he saves us and light - ens ev - 'ry load.
 the bright courts of heav - en and in - to end - less day.

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851-1934, sts. 1-2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1815-1925, st. 3; John C. Matthes, 1876-1948, st. 4

Music: ES IST EIN ROS, Alte katholische geistliche Kirchengelehrte, Köln, 1599; arr. Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621

SECOND READING**Micah 5:2-5a***Hector Quinones*

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL ELW 279 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
 4 O bo - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
 while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won-dring love.
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
 cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
 O morn-ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
 No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
 We hear the Christ-mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1892
 Music: ST. LOUIS, Lewis H. Redner, 1851-1906

THIRD READING**Luke 1:26-35, 38***Karen Olson*

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL **ELW 265** *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

1. The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,
 2. "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,
 3. Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;
 4. Of her, Em-man - u - el, the Christ, was born
 with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:
 all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;
 "To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.
 in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,
 "All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,
 thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
 "My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."
 and Chris-tian folk through-out the world will ev - er say:
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."

Text: Basque carol; para. Sabine Buring-Gould, 1834-1924
 Music: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE. Basque carol

FOURTH READING **Luke 2:1-7** *Jonas Holdcraft*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time

came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

R The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

CAROL **ELW 276** *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*



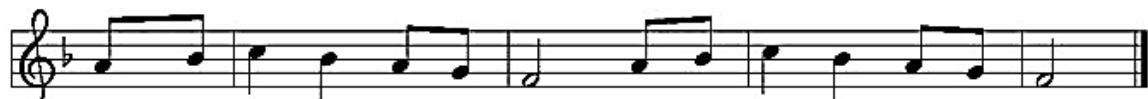
1 In - fant ho - ly, in - fant low - ly, for his bed a cat - the stall;
2 Flocks were sleep - ing, shep - herds keep - ing vig - il till the morn - ing new



ox - en low - ing, lit - tle know - ing Christ the child is Lord of all.
saw the glo - ry, heard the sto - ry, tid - ings of a gos - pel true.



Swift - ly wing - ing, an - gels sing - ing, bells are ring - ing, tid - ings bring - ing:
Thus re - joic - ing, free from sor - row, prais - es voic - ing, greet the mor - row:



Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

Text: Polish carol; tr. Edith M. G. Reed, 1885-1933, alt.
Music: W ZŁOBIE LEŻY, Polish carol

FIFTH READING**Luke 2:8-16** *Hector Quinones*

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL

ELW 275

Angels, from the Realm of Glory

1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,

once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.
seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt., sts. 1–3; *Salisbury Hymn Book*, 1857, st. 4
Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry T. Smart, 1813–1879

SIXTH READING**John 1:1-14** *Jonas Holdcraft*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

R The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL ELW 510 Word of God, Come Down on Earth

1 Word of God, come down on earth, liv - ing rain from
2 Word e - ter - nal, throned on high, Word that brought to
3 Word that speaks God's ten - der love, one with God be -

heav'n de - scend - ing; touch our hearts and bring to birth
life cre - a - tion, Word that came from heav'n to die,
yond all tell - ing, Word that sends us from a - bove

faith and hope and love un - end - ing, Word al - might - y,
cru - ci - fied for our sal - va - tion, say - ing Word, the
God the Spir - it, with us dwell - ing, Word of truth, to

we re - vere you; Word made flesh, we long to hear you.
world re - stor - ing, speak to us, your love out - pour - ing.
all truth lead us; Word of life, with one bread feed us.

Stand as you are able.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

A Glory to God in the highest,

C and peace to God's people on earth.

A Blessed are you, Prince of Peace.

 You rule the earth with truth and justice.

C Send your gift of peace to all nations of the world.

A Blessed are you, Son of Mary.

 You share our humanity.

**C Have mercy on the sick, the dying,
 and all who suffer this day.**

A Blessed are you, Son of God.

 You dwell among us as the Word made flesh.

**C Reveal yourself to us in your holy word,
 that we may bear your light to all the world. Amen.**

THE PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

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

Be seated as the gifts are gathered.

OFFERING

Stand as you are able.

OFFERING PRAYER

A Good and loving God,
we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of
your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessings for others.
With the trees of the field, with all the earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the
coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

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.**

+SENDING+

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

P May the Word that Mary brought to birth carry you into new and abundant life.

C **Amen.**

P May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms enfold you with love and strength.

C **Amen.**

P May the Word that angels proclaimed in song bring harmony to our world.

C **Amen.**

P And the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

C **Amen.**

SENDING CAROL

290 *Go Tell it on the Mountain*

Refrain

Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;
 go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!

1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
 2 The shep-herds feared and trem - bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
 3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born;

be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
 rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
 and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless-ed Christ-mas morn.

Refrain

Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.
 Music: GO TELL IT, African American spiritual

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 Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C **Thanks be to God!**

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Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416

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With today's altar flowers,
Judi Duffy honors Colin Hackley
for his efficiency, carefulness, dedication
and "constant helpfulness to me."

Amen to that, Judi!

Calendar for December 28 - January 04

Dec. 28 Sun. 9 am Bible study
10 am Worship, Christmas Lessons and Carols

Jan. 4 9 am Bible study
10 am Worship, Second Sunday of Christmas

The office will be closed on Jan. 01.

SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, Judi Duffy, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Olivia James, Sandy Ness, Simone Schuster, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY		
SERVING	DEC. 28	JAN. 04
ASSISTING MINISTER	Jen Dritt	Audrey Post
CUP MINISTER		Susan Warren
CANTOR		
LECTOR	Karen Olson Hector Quinones Jonas Holdcraft	Bastian /Andrew Stover
ACOLYTE	Ceilia Greeley or Graham Reece or Bastian Stover	
TECH TEAM	Lorraine Sunberg Audrey Post	Mark Greeley Cindy Suhrweir
USHERS	Ben Bush Bob Eshleman	Jan Harrison Patrick Kennell
ALTAR GUILD	Rita Ford	Rita Ford Anita Sawh
COUNTERS	Margaret Bowers Patricia Handschy	Kirsten Ebbesen Rob Schiffer

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 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 Hingst/ Montgomery family and friends following the death of Ann; The family of George Rahdert (Florida-Bahamas Synod Attorney, friend of Cheryl), mourning his death from cancer; For Karen Olson; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Isaac (son of Terri Schmitt), for physical and emotional healing; Margarete Deckert (mother of Caroline Collins), ongoing prayers for strength as she is recovering from illness; Donna Dickson Miller (friend of Audrey Post), facing health challenges; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart), Donna Schiffer for the passing of her sister; Rocky Bevis (Margaret Bowers' boss); 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;

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2026: Offering envelopes for next year are available for pick-up in the narthex.

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 and signing up for the 2026 Flower Chart located in the narthex. The cost is \$40, and you can place that in the offering plate.