ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



November 15, 2026
10 a.m.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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

Our readings during November speak of the end times. Zephaniah proclaims that the coming day of the Lord will be filled with wrath and distress. Paul says it will come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather around signs of hope—word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the good news of Christ's coming among us.

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, our dwelling place for all generations, whose compassion never slumbers.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for reflection.

P Holy God,

C we confess that we have trusted in our preparation instead of your invitation. We prioritize our piety over care for your beloved. We trust the voice of our shame and fear, which keeps us from entering fully into relationship with you and others. We are not awake to the coming of your reign. Rouse us and rescue us, that we may enter into your joy. Amen.

P Inherit the riches of God's grace. ✠ Jesus, the good shepherd, feeds you with his mercy. You are forgiven. Blessed are you.

C Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 327 *Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow (vs 1-3)*



Text: Bernhardt S. Ingemann, 1789–1862; tr. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834–1924, alt.
Music: EBENEZER, Thomas J. Williams, 1869–1944

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.

HYMN OF PRAISE




Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 3 Sing with all the peo-ple of
God, and join in the hymn of all cre-a-tion: Bless-ing, hon-or,
glo-ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A-men.
Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 4 For the Lamb who was
slain has be-gun his reign. Al-le-lu-ia.
Final refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY



P Let us pray.

Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.



The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME

+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the Lord as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the Lord.

7 Be silent before the Lord God, for the day of the Lord is at hand! The Lord has
prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated his guests. 12 At that time I will search Jerusalem
with lamps, and I will punish the people who settle like dregs in wine, those who say in
their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm." 13 Their wealth shall be
plundered and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit
them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.
14 The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of
the Lord is bitter; the warrior cries aloud there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of
distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of
clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.
17 I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they
have sinned against the Lord, their blood shall be poured out like dust and their flesh like
dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the
Lord's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed, for a full, a
terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12 *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader [1] Lord, you have | been our refuge
from one generation | to another.

C **[2] Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the | earth were born,**
from age to age | you are God.

L [3] You turn us back to the | dust and say,
"Turn back, O child- | ren of earth."

C **[4] For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when | it is past and like a watch | in the night;**

L [5] you sweep them away | like a dream,
they fade away suddenly | like the grass:

C **[6] in the morning it is | green and flourishes;**
in the evening it is dried | up and withered.

L [7] For we are consumed | by your anger;
we are afraid because | of your wrath.

C **[8] Our iniquities you have | set before you,**
and our secret sins in the light | of your countenance.

L [9] When you are angry, all our | days are gone;
we bring our years to an end | like a sigh.

C **[10] The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength | even eighty;**
yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and | we are gone.

L [11] Who regards the power | of your wrath?
Who rightly fears your | indignation?

C **[12] So teach us to num- | ber our days**
that we may apply our | hearts to wisdom.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

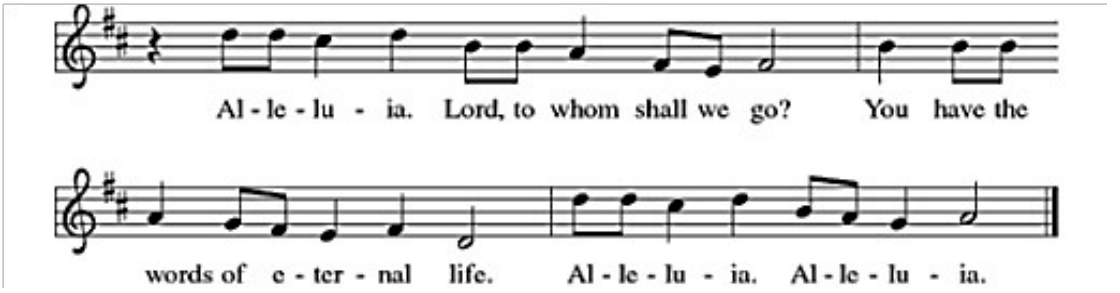
[1] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to
have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves know very well that the day of the
Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] When they say, "There is peace and security,"
then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant
woman, and there will be no escape! [4] But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness,
for that day to surprise you like a thief; [5] for you are all children of light and children of
the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. [6] So, then, let us not fall asleep as others
do, but let us keep awake and be sober, [7] for those who sleep sleep at night, and those
who are drunk get drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober and
put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For
God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus
Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.
[11] Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. At once 16 the one who had received the five talents went off and traded with them and made five more talents. 17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18 But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

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.*

Quiet reflection.

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY WOV 778 *O Christ the Same*



Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926
Music: LONDONDERRY AIR, Irish tune

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

United with the great cloud of witnesses, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

(A brief silence)

You build up the church and the faithful witnesses from all faiths throughout the generations. Enrich us with your mercy and lead us to outreach and service. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

As the night grows longer, make us mindful of the earth's need for rest. Provide for fallow fields and hibernating animals; show us the way to curb human impact on forest and wetlands. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Rescue all nations from war and violence. Disrupt the complacency of local and national leaders. Recommit us to transform systems that divide and oppress. Provide safe homes, caring adults, and opportunities to learn for children around the world. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

In your embrace we find refuge and healing. Care for immigrants separated from families, people caught in human trafficking and reassure all who face illness and despair. St. Stephen, who else would welcome our prayers today?

(Pause for people to speak petitions.)

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Bless all who serve in congregational leadership roles like Mutual Ministry and property upkeep. Bless our stewardship campaign speakers and the generosity of this congregation. Encourage us with healthy resources for the mission of the gospel. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

A few at a time, each week, we pray for people within the St. Stephen worship community. We pray today for Pastor Mary Nesmith, Sandy Ness, and Andrea and Todd Notley, and for their extended families. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

The faithful of every age trust in the hope of your saving grace. In thanksgiving for the ways our ancestors have journeyed before us, we remember all who have entered eternal life in you. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Into your steadfast love, faithful God, we entrust all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus, your beloved.

AMEN!

The peace of Christ be with you, always!

And also with you!

Let us share the peace of God with one another.



Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint

venmo

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

+ MEAL +

OFFERING

An offering is presented for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

ANTHEM *"Evermore I'll Sing Your Praise" -Lawton*

(Refrain)
Evermore I'll sing your praise,
Evermore through endless days,
God of all seasons, right and reason,
Lord of love and endless grace.

In God alone I will find my salvation,
In God I trust and I shall not fear.
God is my song, my Joy, and celebration;
God is my comfort, my strength forever near. (refrain)

And I will tell of the glory of God's kindness,
And I will sing of the glory of God's name.
And I will dwell with the Lord who heals all blindness,
Forever seeking God's light to guide my way. (refrain)

OFFERING HYMN **531** *The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing (vs. 1)*

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



Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950
Music: Graham Kendrick
Text and music © 1989 Make Way Music, admin. Music Services in the Western Hemisphere

THE FEAST IS READY
LM and refrain

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; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. 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



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.

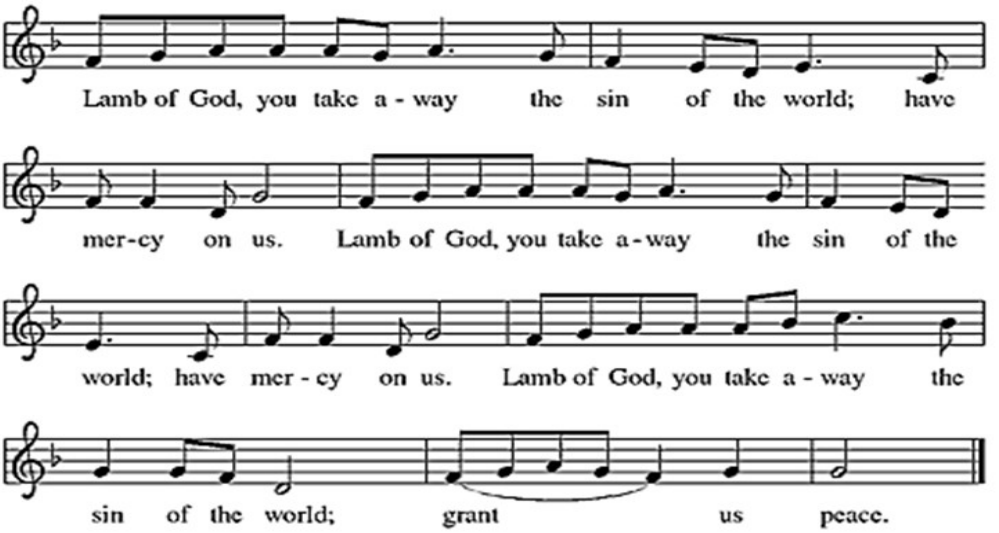
C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P In bread and cup the reign of Christ is breaking in. Come, receive what Christ has prepared.

The assembly is seated.

LAMB OF GOD



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 (first) and grape juice (second) from pouring cups. Take a communion glass from one of the trays at the corners as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the lower rail. Wheat-free wafers are available, simply tell the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS **ELW 726** *Light Dawns on a Weary World*

ELW 674 *Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ*

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Holy God, we have received your never-ending mercy in this meal. You continuously seek the lost, bind the injured, and feed your people abundantly. Now send us out, awake to your presence, now and forever.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

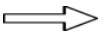
The assembly stands.

+ SENDING +

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

P The holy Trinity, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you with wisdom to welcome the reign of God, today and always.

C Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW 715 *Christ, Be Our Light* 

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. Encourage one another.

C Thanks be to God!

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416
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SENDING HYMN ELW 715 *Christ, Be Our Light*



Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957
Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell
Text and music © 1993 Bernadette Farrell.Published by OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.



Today's altar flowers are dedicated to the glory of God in celebration of Cheryl Stuart's birthday, from her family.

Next Sunday's Readings, Christ the King Sunday:

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 95:1-7a
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46



SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Tom Buchanan, Mark Canning, Austin Cowan, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Alison Haney, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Olivia James, Lawana Lamb-Daniels, Graham Reece, Jen Reece, Donna Schiffer, Simone Schuster, Sylvia Smith, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White.

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY		
Serving	**November 15**	**November 22**
Assisting Minister	Beth Alexander	Jen Dritt
Cup Minister	Susan Warren	Loraine Sundberg
Cantor	Susan Hehn	Austin Cowan
Lector	Jennifer Buchanan	Celia/Mark Greeley
Acolyte		
Tech Team	Mark Greeley Ben Bush	Jacob Nallapu Loraine Sundberg
Ushers	Ann DelRossi Bob Eshleman	Audrey Post Jan Harrison
Altar Guild	Anita Sawh Rita Ford	
Counters	Janet Barber Susan Warren	Diane Hines Margret Bowers

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: Matthew Canning (son of Sue and Mark Canning); Scott Simmons (son of Sharon Simmons); Gordon Fleischer; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; David McManus (friend of Audrey Post); Shannon Miller (friend of Barb ODonnell).

Health and protection: For Frank "Rame" Meyers, in long-term care. 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, that they may be safe and secure without unnecessary deportations.

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: Joann Stomberg (friend of Margaret Bowers), after the death of her husband; Jayden Schiffer (grandson of Rob and Donna Schiffer), experiencing unresolved and serious digestive problems; Pr. Trixie Richter (friend of Cheryl), on the unexpected death of her husband, Adrian; St. Philip Lutheran Church, Mt. Dora, as they grieve their pastor's loss; Cheryl Stuart and family, following the death of her friend Linda Bobbit; Charlie Cogswell, son of Judee Light, for continued healing; Haley Larsen (daughter of Rob Schiffer's cousin), experiencing serious gastrointestinal problems; 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); Walt Steinvorth (friend of Rob Schiffer), suffering from pericarditis and vestibular neuritis and learning to cope with dizziness and severe equilibrium problems; Karen Elizabeth Olson.

Church concerns: St. Stephen 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 November 15 - November 22

15	Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
		9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
		10:00 am	Worship, Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
16	Mon	6:00 pm	Interfaith Thanksgiving Service
18	Wed.	6:00 pm	Adult confirmation
		7:00 pm	Choir rehearsal
19	Thurs,	10:00 am	Bible study
22	Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
		9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
		10:00 am	Worship, Christ the King Sunday

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING ENVELOPES: If you need any offering envelopes, please let Rita know. You may notice that the printed dates on them have been blocked out. We're doing that intentionally so we can make full use of our current supply and avoid wasting them.

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 in 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***

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