

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fourth Sunday of Advent



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023

10 A.M.

INTRODUCTION

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



+ GATHERING +

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation (C) Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

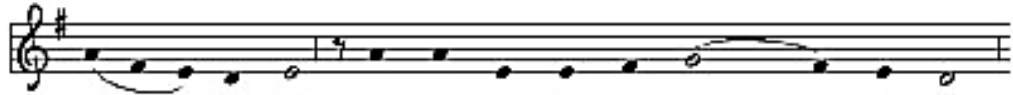
P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of word and sacrament in the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
 4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 teach us your will and guide our way, Re - joice! Re - joice!
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
 and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

- 5 O come, O Key of David, come,
 and open wide our heav'nly home;
 make safe the way that leads on high,
 and close the path to misery. *Refrain*
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
 O Sun of justice, now draw near.
 Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
 and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,
 O Cornerstone that binds in one:
 refresh the hearts that long for you;
 restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*
- 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*


GREETING

B 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.

KYRIE

Leader or All



O Lord, have . . . mer-cy up-on us. Christ, have mer - cy.

All



O Lord, have . . . mer-cy up-on us. Christ, have mer - cy.

Leader or All All



Have mer - cy, O Lord. Have mer - cy, O Lord.



PRAYER OF THE DAY

B Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.


C Amen.

Come Now, O Prince of Peace

Ososŏ, ososŏ



O - so - sŏ o - so - sŏ, pyong - hwa - ūi - im - gŭm
 1 Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
 2 Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.
 3 Come now and set us free, O God, our Sav - ior.
 4 Come, Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y.



u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sŏ.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.

The assembly is seated.

Text: Geonyong Lee, h. 1947; tr. Marion Pope
 Music: OSOSŎ, Geonyong Lee, b. 1947
 Text and music © Geonyong Lee.

CHILDREN'S TIME



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of

Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Reader The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Luke 1:46b-55

We sing the psalm in response to the first reading.



Leader ^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,

**C ⁴⁸for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.
 From this day all generations will | call me blessed:**

L ⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me
 and holy | is your name.

**C ⁵⁰You have mercy on | those who fear you,
 from generation to | generation.**

L ⁵¹You have shown strength | with your arm
 and scattered the proud in | their conceit,

C ⁵²casting down the mighty | from their thrones
and lifting | up the lowly.

L ⁵³You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.

C ⁵⁴You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,

L ⁵⁵the promise made | to our forebears,
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sung twice)

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Christ is ris - en, ris'n in - deed.

GOSPEL: GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

P The holy gospel according to Luke, the first chapter.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing

will be impossible with God.”³⁸ Then 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.

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 672 *Signs and Wonders*



1 Signs and won - ders lead the danc - ing from the heart God frees from fear:
2 Hope and free - dom join the cir - cle: Mar - y to the gar - den came,
3 Cast a - side all fear and hid - ing; hand in hand we dance the round.



wings of an - gels greet the mai - den, and God finds a dwell - ing here;
saw the ra - diance of the mar - vel, heard the Ris - en call her name;
God is with us, Christ, a - bid - ing, and the Spir - it's gifts a - bound.



bold - ly may we lift our hands, bow the head, and voice A - men;
bold - ly may we heed Christ's call, step be - yond the gar - den wall:
Called by God to ho - li - ness, let us bold - ly serve and bless;



thus does glo - ry shine at mid - night: o - pen hearts in - vite the star - light.
beau - ti - ful the feet pro - ceed - ing with good news of death's de - feat - ing.
and to hearts that sigh and hun - ger may our lives dance signs and won - ders.

Text: Susan Palo Cherwien, b. 1953

Music: FREU DICHI SEHR, *Trente quatre psaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

Text © 2005 Susan Palo Cherwien. admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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: Merciful God,

Congregational response: receive our prayer.

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 +

OFFERING *An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.*

We stand and sing as the collection and the gifts are brought forward

OFFERING HYMN 690 *We Raise Our Hands to You, O Lord (vs. 1 & 5)*



1	We	raise	our hands to	you, O Lord,	like
2	What	good	and bless - ing	you be - stow	are
3	Oh,	make	our bar - ren	trees to grow,	our
4	As	sum - mer	fol - lows	spring-time's rain,	grace
5	Through	grace	your new cre - a - tion	lies	in



emp - ty	ves - sels.	Oh, come to us	and
free - ly	giv - en.	Your pow'r will make	the
hands to	blos - som,	and let our lives	bring
fol - lows	sor - row,	and grief and joy	shall
hands held	o - pen.	O Giv - er of	all



give us life	from springs where liv - ing wa - ters flow.
weak - est strong	and bar - ren branch - es start to bud.
forth such fruit	that heals our neigh - bor's grief and pain.
bear much fruit,	though hid - den from our hu - man eyes.
good - ness, come,	dwell with us in our earth - ly home.

Text: Sverin Ellingsen, b. 1929; tr. Hedwig T. Durnbaugh, b. 1929
 Music: Trond Kverno, b. 1945
 1. © Hedwig T. Durnbaugh;
 Music © 1978 Norsk Musikkforlag

VI RENNER VÅRE HENDER FREM
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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 comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. 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 God of pow - er and might,



heav - en and earth . . . are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of our God.

Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est.

Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est.

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 Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The assembly is seated.

LAMB OF GOD



O Lamb . . of God, you . . take a - way the
sin of the world; . . . have . . mer - cy up - on us.

O Lamb . . of God, you . . take a - way the
sin of the world; . . . have . . mer - cy up - on us.

O Lamb . . of God, you . . take a - way the
sin of the world; . . . have . . mer - cy up -
on us, have . . . mer - cy up - on us.

Grant us your peace. A - men.

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 minister offers a pouring cup (wine or grape juice). If you prefer to receive the wine or juice in an individual glass, take one from the tray as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the rail. Wheat-free wafers are available--simply tell the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS	265	<i>The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came</i>
	253	<i>He Came Down</i>
	261	<i>As the Dark Awaits the Dawn</i>

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

O God, in this holy communion you have welcomed us into your presence, nourished us with words of mercy, and fed us at your table. Amid the cares of this life, strengthen us to love you with all our heart, serve our neighbors with a willing spirit, and honor the earth you have made; through Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

+ SENDING +

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

P The holy Three, the holy One increase your hope, strengthen your faith, deepen your love, and ✠ grant you peace.

C **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate: the King of glo - ry
 2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's
 3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true
 4 Come, Lord, our Sav - lor, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen

comes in state: the Lord of lords and King of kings, the
 gen - tile self, His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his
 king's com - mands, And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the
 wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -

Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion
 sleep - er is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows
 ham - ble plac - es where he dwells, He is the right - ful
 on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly

to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and
 to on end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and
 Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -
 Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We

praise our God and Lord, Cre - a - tor, Spir - it, Word.
 wor - ship him with song for sav - ing us from wrong.
 a - tor of the world, our on - ly strength for good.
 praise your ho - ly name, from age to age the same!


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. Serve the Lord.
- C Thanks be to God.**

+ + +

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	<p>With today's altar flowers, Lawana and Sandy Lamb-Daniels wish a happy, heavenly birthday to Mathe', Lawana's sister.</p>
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<u>Calendar for December 24 - Dec. 31</u>				
Dec.	24	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Fourth Sunday of Advent /Children’s Program
			7:00 pm	Christmas Eve worship service
	27	Wed.	7:00 pm	Choir practice
	31	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Christmas Lessons and Carols

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, Martin Guttenplan, Vicki Guttenplan, Ron Hartung, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Sandy Ness, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Serving	December 24	December 31
Assisting Minister	Beth Alexander	Jennifer Dritt
Cup Minister	Rita Ford	Colleen Holdcraft
Cantor		
Lector	Judi Duffy	Ron Hartung
Acolyte	Cup Minister - or Colton Allen or Graham Reece	
Tech Team	Caroline Collins Audrey Post	Sandy Lamb-Daniels Audrey Post
Ushers	Bob Eshleman Lawana Lamb-Daniels	Bob Eshleman Jan Harrison
Altar Guild	Linda Eshleman Lawana Lamb-Daniels Sandy Lamb-Daniels	
Counters	Janet Barber Susan Warren	Audrey Post Billie Reardon



POINSETTIAS ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD BY:

Denise Bookwalter and Mark Greeley (2), dedicated to our St. Stephen family.

Jennifer and Tom Buchanan, in memory of Janis Parker.

The Claussen Family (2), dedicated to our family & friends.

Judi Duffy (1), dedicated to the glorious birth of Jesus and in thanksgiving for my family & friends.

Bob and Linda Eshleman (2), dedicated to the glory of God.

Jan Harrison (2), dedicated to the memory of loved ones.

Gladys Kane (2), dedicated to all our church family.

Lawana and Sandy Lamb-Daniels (3), dedicated to Bill & Marilyn Daniels, Junior & Lula Lamb, Barbara Maddox, Mathe' Metcalf, and Becky Daniels.

Martha Marky (1), dedicated to my loving family.

Sandy Ness (2), dedicated to children Eric & Jennifer..

Andrea Notley (1), dedicated to the Notley Family.

Audrey Post (1), dedicated to my sister-in-law, Wanda Lynn Post.

Sharon Simmons (1), dedicated to the glory of God.

Barbara Sullivan (1), dedicated to Jack Sullivan.

PRAYER REQUESTS

New concerns: Pr. Carol Solovitz (from Lakeland, FL) and family, our shared sympathy on the death of her husband, Steve.

For the sick: Val Sullivan; Margarete Decker (mother of Caroline Collins); Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Don Dowd; Isabelle Taylor (granddaughter of Bill & Connie Taylor), being treated for rheumatoid arthritis and Primary Immunodeficiency; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Dan Graney (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White).

In treatment for cancer: Phil Williams; Gordon Fleischer; Stephanie Barber; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; James Sablan (brother of Donna Schiffer); Bruce Blubbaum (cousin of Sharon Simmons); Craig Timm (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Laura Ketchum-Jahn, (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Aubrey Thonvold (Reconciling Works Exec. Dir.); Judy Renwick (friend of Judi Duffy); Gil Johnson (friend of Judi Duffy).

Health and protection: For all affected by the coronavirus – especially those experiencing mental-health difficulties due to isolation, those struggling to recover from the disease, those on the front lines fighting, researching and treating the disease (doctors, nurses, medical personnel, EMTs), the millions of unemployed people, etc.; for the unaccompanied children entering the U.S., including those “unaccounted for.”

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: For Karen Olson; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Isaac (son of Terri Schmitt), for physical and emotional healing; Steve Michael (cousin of Rob Schiffer), in rehab after a serious accident.

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; Grace Lutheran Church; Bishop Pedro Suarez; for rest and rejuvenation for Presiding Bishop Eaton as she takes a leave of absence for several months; Interim Presiding Bishop Michael Burk, providing leadership in Bp. Eaton's absence; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA Advocacy offices and ministry; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Pensacola.

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 Afghanistan and the Middle East.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FLOWER CHART FOR 2024: 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 2024 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>.