

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD



DECEMBER 24, 2025

6 P.M.

CHRISTMAS EVE
December 24, 2025
6:00 pm

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH
2198 N. Meridian Road
Tallahassee, FL 32303-5062
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Tom Holdcraft, Pastor
Katharine Gossman, Music Director Rita Ford, Office Manager
All Members, Ministers

Welcome, Everyone!

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.

ELW refers to the red *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* book.

Serving tonight:

Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Presiding, Preaching
Katharine Gossman, Music Director
Colleen Holdcraft, Assisting Minister
Audrey Post, Cup Minister
Monty Mortensen, Lector

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.

+GATHERING+

PRELUDE

WORDS OF WELCOME

Stand as you are able.

GATHERING CAROL

ELW 283

O Come, All Ye Faithful



GREETING

Pastor The Savior of the world is born!

All To us the Son is given! Alleluia!

P The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, born of Mary, be with you all.

All And also with you.



PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

All Amen.

Be seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME Blessing the Nativity



+WORD+

FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

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.

Reader Word of God, Word of Life.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Stand as you are able for the reading of the Christmas Gospel.

We sing to welcome the good news.

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!

GOSPEL: Luke: 2:1-14 [15-20]

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

All Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When 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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P The gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

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!

Be seated.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Stand as you are able.

CAROL OF THANKSGIVING

ELW 292 *Love Has Come*



1 Love has come—a light in the dark-ness! Love shines forth in the
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won-der. Love is God now a-
3 Love has come and nev-er will leave us! Love is life ev-er-



Beth-le-hem skies. See, all heav-en has come to pro-claim it;
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth-er;
last-ing and free. Love is Je-sus with-in and a-mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un-to
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
gift of Christ-mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Text: Ken Bible, b. 1950

Music: UN FLAMBEAU, F. Seguin, *Recueil de noëls composés en langue provençale*, 1856

Text © 1996 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (ASCAP), c/o Integrity Media, Inc., 1000 Cody Road, Mobile, AL 36695.

THE PRAYERS

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+

OFFERING

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

Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint



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OFFERING CAROL

ELW 296

What Child Is This (vs. 1 & 3)

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep-ing?
 2 Why lies he in such mean es-tate where ox and ass are feed-ing?
 3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas-ant, king, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an-thems sweet while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?
 Good Chris-tian, fear; for sin-ners here the si - lent Word is plead-ing.
 The King of kings sal - va-tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en-throne him.



This, this is Christ the king, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;
 Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
 Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
 hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
 joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!



Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898
 Music: GREENSLYEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P The Lord be with you.

All And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

All **We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All **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. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God, whom we can not see. 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:

CAROL OF PRAISE

ELW 270

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king;
 2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
 3 Hail the heav'n - born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ-teous-ness!

peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.

Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see! Hail, in - cur - nate de - i - ty!
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

with un - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
 born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Refrain

Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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

All 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 A child has been born for us, a Son given to us. Come, receive the gift of Jesus.

Be seated.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

The pastor and assisting ministers will offer bread, wine and grape juice in celebration of the Lord's Supper. The wine and grape juice are pre-poured in the tray. The center ring is the grape juice and the outer ring is wine. Wheat-free wafers are available - simply tell the minister offering bread.

COMMUNION HYMNS

279 O Little Town of Bethlehem

282 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

As we return to our places, the light of Christ will spread through the church, each person lighting the candle of his or her neighbor.

Stand as you are able.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Merciful God, we thank you for Jesus, who is our heavenly food. Strengthened by this goodness, send us forth to announce your peace, comfort the afflicted, and share the good news of great joy.

All Amen.

CHRISTMAS HYMN ELW 281 *Silent Night*

The musical score for "Silent Night" (Stille Nacht) consists of three staves of music. The top staff is for soprano or alto voices, the middle staff is for bass or tenor voices, and the bottom staff is for piano. The lyrics are written in both German and English, with the German text above the English text. The music is in common time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The piano part includes harmonic notation and dynamic markings.

Still - ie Nacht, heil - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,

ein - sam wacht mir das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light ru - diant beams from your ho - ly face,

Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your

Ruh. schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mühl, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885
Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787-1863

+SENDING+

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

P The God of love, Father, $\text{\textt{T}}$ Son, and Holy Spirit, lavish you with grace, illumine your path, and increase your joy, today and always.

C **Amen.**

Please extinguish your candles.

CAROL OF JOY

ELW 267 *Joy to the World*

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - ry heart pre - pare him
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
 flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 ness and won - ders of his love, und won - ders of his
 and heav'n and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
 Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

P Go in peace. The Word of God dwells in you richly.

All Thanks be to God!



2025 Poinsettias

Mark and Sue Canning (2): Dedicated to Sue's mom – Elinor and Mark's mom - Millie.

Bob and Linda Eshleman (2)

Rita Ford (1): Dedicated to my parents.

Jan Harrison (1): Dedicated to the memory of loved ones.

Ron and Ruth Hartung (3): In gratitude for the people who make it possible for us to worship from home every Sunday.

Colleen and Tom Holdcraft (1): Dedicated to loved ones.

Lawana and Sandy Lamb-Daniels (4): Dedicated to William and Marilyn Daniels, Junior and Lula Lamb, Barbara Maddox and Mathe Harris.

Marilyn Larson (2)

Martha Marky (1): Dedicated to the Glory of God.

Rob and Donna Schiffer (2): In loving memory of Debbie Vickery.
In loving memory of Amy Blount.

Jennifer Slusarz (1): Dedicated to my parents, Ben and Frani Slusarz

Judi Duffy (1): In memory of my original family: Dr. Karl, Harriet and David Vetter.

