

# ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



DECEMBER 14, 2025

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

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### 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.**

## INTRODUCTION

*A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.*

## WELCOME

**PRELUDE** "Oh Come, O Come Emmanuel" - Anne Krentz Organ Karl Barton, flute

*The assembly stands.*



## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

Pastor: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure.

**Congregation: Amen.**

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

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P Long-expected God,

**C we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.**

P God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. ✠ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.


**C Amen.**



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!  
 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!  
 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!  
 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!  
 Palm branch-es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
 Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.  
 His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
 God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
 All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:  
 So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

*Refrain*



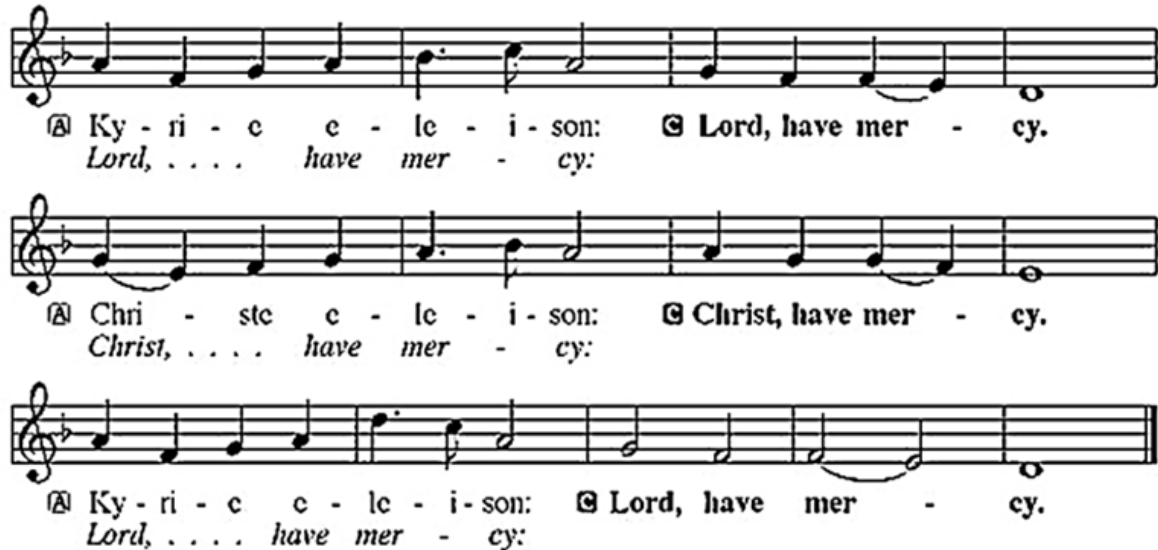
Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

## 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.

## Kyrie



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

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

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

## PRAYER OF THE DAY



**P** Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father 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 - ŭi - 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.

*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.

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

*The assembly is seated.*

*“Hayden Concerto in G Major” by Astrid Van Der Mark on Violin*



**+ WORD +**

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10**

*The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.*

<sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus <sup>2</sup>it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.]] <sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup>Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” <sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; <sup>6</sup>then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup>the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. <sup>8</sup>A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. <sup>9</sup>No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. <sup>10</sup>And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Reader            The Word of the Lord.

**C                Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM:**      **Psalm 146:5-10**    *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader    <sup>5</sup> Happy are they who have the God of Jacob <sup>|</sup> for their help,  
                 whose hope is in the <sup>|</sup> Lord their God;

**C**        <sup>6</sup> **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that <sup>|</sup> is in them;**  
                 **who keeps promis- <sup>|</sup> es forever;**

L        <sup>7</sup> who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to <sup>|</sup> those who hunger.  
                 The Lord sets the <sup>|</sup> captive free.

**C**        <sup>8</sup> **The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who <sup>|</sup> are**  
**bowed down;**  
                 **the Lord <sup>|</sup> loves the righteous.**

L        <sup>9</sup> The Lord cares <sup>|</sup> for the stranger;  
                 the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way <sup>|</sup> of the  
                 wicked.

**C**        <sup>10</sup> **The Lord shall <sup>|</sup> reign forever,**  
                 **your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. <sup>|</sup> Hallelujah!**

*Spoken after the psalm is sung:*

**Amen.**



## **SECOND READING      James 5:7-10**

*In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.*

<sup>7</sup> Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**R**      The Word of the Lord.

**C**      **Thanks be to God.**

*The assembly is seated.*

*“Ob Come, O Come Emmanuel” - Instrument/Soloist by Simone Schuster*

*“Sound of Christmas” (An interactive Christmas story) by  
Celia, Violet, Bastian, Armand, Elliot and Graham*

*“Away in a Manger” - Instrument/Soloist by Isabel Barton*

*The assembly stands.*

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Each petition ends: God of grace,*

*Congregational response: hear our prayer.*

## 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.*

*The assembly is seated.*

*"O Holy Night" - Interpretive dance*



## 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.*

Stephen Saint  
@Stephen-Saint



**venmo**

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

## OFFERING HYMN

*Let the Vineyards be Fruitful Lord*

*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  
bless - 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; 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 musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). 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.

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 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.

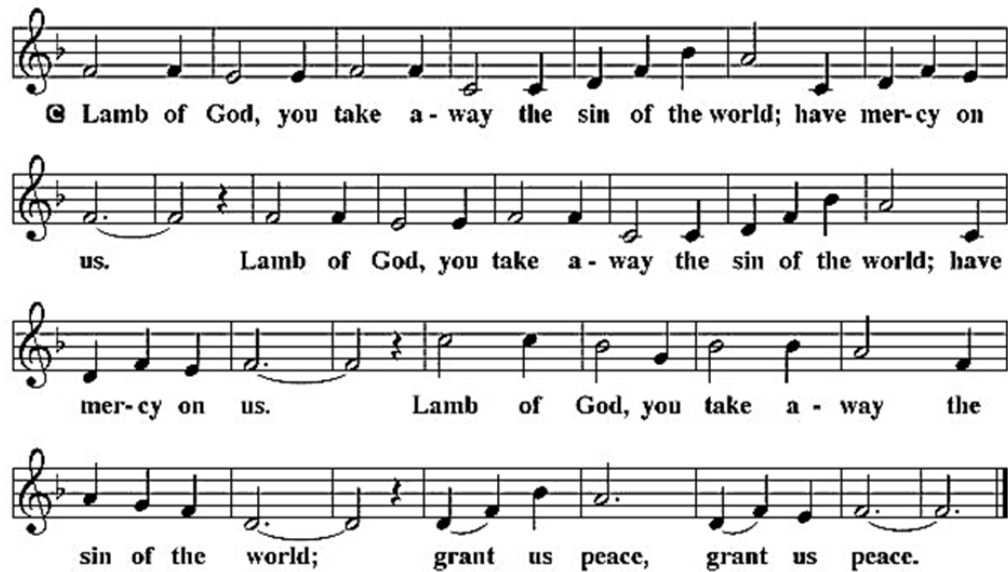
C      **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory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

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P      Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

*The assembly is seated.*

## LAMB OF GOD



**G** 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 (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

242 *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn*

253 *He Came Down*

*The assembly stands.*

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A      Let us pray.

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

C      **Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*The assembly stands.*

**+ SENDING +**

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

P      May God who comes among us, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always.

C      **Amen.**



1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing  
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is  
 3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the  
 4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new



of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
 plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,  
 bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,  
 life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming



trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look  
 that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look  
 bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look  
 with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look



east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Music: BESANÇON, French carol

Text © Miss E. Farjeon Will Trust, by permission of David Higham Associates.



## 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. Keep awake.
- C Thanks be to God!**

+ + +

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**With today's altar flowers,  
Gladys Kane  
welcomes her *fourth* great-grandchild,  
born Monday in Atlanta.**

### Calendar for December 14 – December 21

Dec 14 Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
	9:30 am	No Choir
	10:00 am	Worship, Third Sunday in Advent
Dec 17 Wed.	7:00 pm	Choir practice
Dec 21 Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
	9:30 am	Choir practice
	10:00 am	Worship, Fourth Sunday in Advent

**Next Sunday's Readings, Fourth Sunday in Advent:**

[Isaiah 7:10-16](#)

[Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19](#)

[Romans 1:1-7](#)

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)



**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	December 14	December 21
Assisting Minister	Beth Alexander	Audrey Post
Cup Minister	Loraine Sundberg	Rob Schiffer
Cantor	Karl Barton	Simone Schuster
Lector	Graham Reese	Stephanie Leitch
Acolyte	Ceilia Greeley or Graham Reece or Bastian Stover	
Tech Team	Mark Greeley Caroline Collins	Ben Bush Sandy Lamb-Daniels
Ushers	Ann Del Rossi Bob Eshleman	Ann Del Rossi Jan Harrison
Altar Guild	Susan Warren Rita Ford	Linda Eshleman Barbara Sullivan
Counters	Billie Reardon Loraine Sundberg	Patricia Handschy 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; Fatima Zaid Paul and family, mourning the death of her nephew, MarKus;

***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

**FLOWER CHART FOR 2025:** 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 2025 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/sermons>. 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/songs-of-st-stephen>.

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

## **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.

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

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

Marilyn Larson (1)

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 nuclear family: Dr. Karl, Harriet and David Vetter.