

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



DECEMBER 15, 2024

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
Lori Zengel, 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.

For safety we no longer pass the offering plate. Financial gifts can be placed in the plate by the baptismal font.

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

Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophecy could as easily herald the coming Christ as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of Jesus and assist all people in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

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, alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon.

C **Amen.**

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

Silence for reflection.

P God of mercy,

C **we confess that we have sinned. We trust earthly powers and human authority alone. We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.**

P God of might,

C **we confess that we have sinned. We have turned away from our neighbors. We have trusted false promises.**

P God in our midst,

C **we confess that we have sinned. We plead: come to us. Bring your mercy to birth in us.**

P A righteous branch springs forth: it is Christ the Lord, our Savior, in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, receive the grace and forgiveness of God through ✝ Christ Jesus, whose day draws near.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

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



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though

an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, Sing out your joy, for
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall

soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing,
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing,
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less,

Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less

geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and

lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

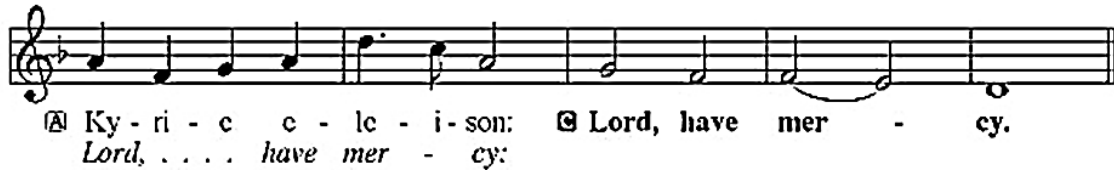
Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
 Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen
 Text and music © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638, www.giaresources.com, 800.442.3358.
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GREETING

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



PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; 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

Ososõ, ososõ

O - so - sǒ o - so - sǒ, 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.

4 Come, Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y.

u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sǒ.

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.

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

The assembly is seated.



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. ¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. ¹⁷ The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing ¹⁸ as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. ¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. ²⁰ At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Luke 12:2-6 *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not ¹ be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might, and has become ¹ my
salvation.

C ³ **With joy you ¹ will draw water**
 from the wells ¹ of salvation.

L ⁴ And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call ¹ on God's name;
 make known the deeds of the Lord among the nations; proclaim that this
name ¹ is exalted.

C ⁵ **Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done ¹ gloriously;**
 let this be known in ¹ all the earth.

L ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O [|] royal Zion,
 for great in your midst is the Holy [|] One of Israel.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

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

C Glory to you, O Lord.

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY 239 *Hark, the Glad Sound!*



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
 Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

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: Lord, in your mercy,

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.

ANTHEM

"He Will Come" - Bell

He will come when we're least expecting him, when the world is unprepared
as if orphaned from its destiny, as if no creator cared.

Though for us, it's out of season,
God decides the place and time.

He will come when we're least expecting him, when agendas have been set,
and the deadlines have been finalized through which needs are seldom met.

Though for us, it's out of season,
God decides the place and time.

He will come when we're least expecting him, not to parliament or queen,
nor to government or treasury, blessing what has always been.

Though for us, it's out of season,
God decides the place and time.

Yes, he'll come and he'll be expecting us to accept his call to dine,
where the guests are God's assortment and the food is bread and wine.

Christ shall come in the proper season,
take his place and claim his time.

OFFERING HYMN

Let the Vineyards be Fruitful Lord



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. 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 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.

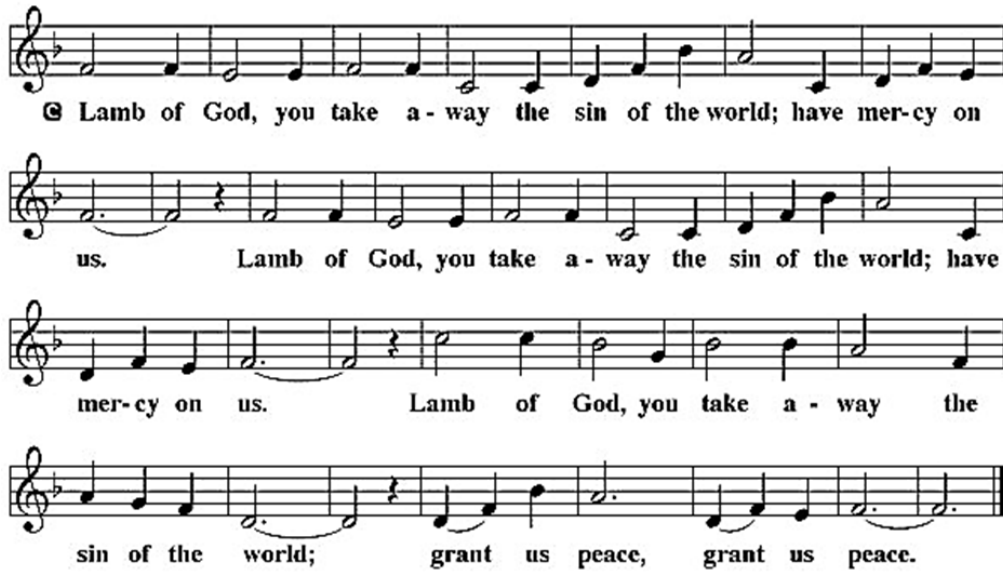
C **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

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 and grape juice from the pouring cup, 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	737	<i>He Comes to Us as One Unknown</i>
	261	<i>As the Dark Awaits the Dawn</i>

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.

C Amen.

+ SENDING +

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

P God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, ✠ bless and keep you now and forever.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

SENDING HYMN

253 *He Came Down*

1 He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
 2 He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light;
 3 He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
 4 He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;

he came down that we may have love;
 he came down that we may have light; hal-le - lu - jah for-ev - er - more.
 he came down that we may have peace;
 he came down that we may have joy;

Text: Cameroon traditional

Music: HE CAME DOWN, Cameroon traditional; arr. John L. Bell, b. 1949

Arr. © 1986 Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent, 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638, www.giamusic.com, 800.442.3358.

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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. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

C Thanks be to God!

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20220805.1416

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**Rita Ford dedicates today's altar flowers
in thankfulness for family and friends.**

Calendar for December 15 - 22

Dec.	15 Sun.	9 am	Book study
		9:30 am	Choir practice
		10 am	Worship, Third Sunday of Advent/Children's program
		11:30 am	Potluck and Congregational picture
	18 Wed.	7 pm	Choir practice
22 Sun.		9 am	Book study
		9:30 am	Choir practice
		10 am	Worship, Fourth Sunday of Advent

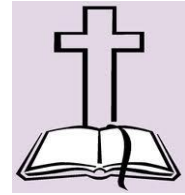
Next Sunday's Readings, Fourth Sunday of Advent:

[Micah 5:2-5a](#)

[Luke 1:46b-55](#)

[Hebrews 10:5-10](#)

[Luke 1:39-45 \[46-55\]](#)



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. 15	Dec. 22
Assisting Minister	Colleen Holdcraft	Kirsten Ebbesen
Cup Minister	Susan Warren	Beth Alexander
Cantor	Colleen Holdcraft	
Lector	Jen Reece	Mark Greeley
Acolyte	Ceilia Greeley or Graham Reece or Bastian Stover	
Tech Team	Mark Greeley Audrey Post	Colleen Holdcraft Joans Holdcraft
Ushers	Bob Eshleman Jan Harrison	Bob Eshleman
Altar Guild	Beth Alexander	Rita Ford Anita Sawh
Counters	Kirsten Ebbesen Rob Schiffer	Patricia Handschy Susan Warren



**POINSETTIAS ARE GIVEN
TO THE GLORY OF GOD BY:**



Janet Barber (1): In memory of Sophie Campbell.

Caroline Collins (2): Dedicated to my parents Fred and Margarete

Rita Ford (1): Dedicated to my parents.

Denise Bookwalter and Mark Greeley (2): Dedicated to the St. Stephen family.

Bob and Linda Eshleman (2): Dedicated for all God's blessings!

Patricia Handschy (1): Dedicated to St. Stephen.

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

Lawana and Sandy Lamb-Daniels (3): Dedicated to Lawana's parents, Junior and Lula Lamb; to Lawan's sisters, Mathe' Metcalf and Barbara Maddox; and to Sandy's parents, Bill and Marilyn Daniels.

Martha Marky (1): Dedicated to my family and friends with hopes for a Blessed Christmas.

Andrea Notley (1): Dedicated to my brother-in-law, Richard Hurtak.

Audrey Post (1): In gratitude for my sister-in-law and housemate, Wanda.

Hector Quinones (1): Blessings to all!

Donna Schiffer (1): In loving memory of Dori Catalano.

Rob and Donna Schiffer (1): Dedicated for our loved ones who have entered heaven before us.

Bert and Loraine Sundberg (1): Dedicated to the glory of God.

PRAYER REQUESTS

New concerns: Margarete Deckert (mother of Caroline Collins), recovering from illness; Donna Dickson Miller (friend of Audrey Post), facing health challenges; Wayne McCully (friend of Audrey Post), undergoing dialysis for kidney failure; Gladys Kane for continued healing.

For the sick: Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); 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; Stephanie Barber; Jim Saxman (uncle of Rob Schiffer); Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; James Sablan (brother of Donna Schiffer); Craig Timm (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Gil Johnson (friend of Judi Duffy); Amanda George (daughter-in-law of Rob Schiffer); David McManus (friend of Audrey Post); Shannon Miller (friend of Barb O'Donnell); Becky Graves (friend of Ridy Hofer); Timothy Stewart (son of Pepper Stewart).

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; 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

PLEDGE DRIVE: We are collecting pledge cards for 2025. Please prayerfully consider your planned contributions for the ministry of St. Stephen. The estimate of giving is vital information for our Church Council to begin preparing our budget. Our planned gifts are also vital to our own spiritual development and maturity. Thank you in advance for your generous stewardship and trust in God's mercy. *(Cards are in the narthex and can be dropped in the collection plate. You also have the option of pledging directly to Lori via email or phone.)*

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/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>.