ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER



MAY 4, 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

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

The disciples make a big splash and eat breakfast with the risen Jesus. Wading in the water (remembering baptism) and eating with Jesus (celebrating holy communion) is our weekly encounter with the risen Christ. Jesus asks us again and again: Do you love me? And Jesus invites us, again and again, to follow him, bringing the Easter life to others.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

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

- P Alleluia! Christ is risen.
- C Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!
- P In the name of + the One who was, who is, and who is to come.
- C Amen.
- P Baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, and called to live the baptized life, let us give thanks for the gifts of baptism.

Water may be poured before or during the thanksgiving.

- P Holy God, we give you thanks for the waters of baptism, waters that make a people your own, that restore to wholeness, and empower us to be witnesses in your name. Baptized into you, O Living One,
- C make us one as you are one.
- P We give you thanks for the waters of baptism, waters that strengthen believers and give new life to beloved servants of your church; waters that extend your boundless love and cross barriers of our own making. Baptized into you, O Living One,
- C make us one as you are one.

- P We give you thanks for the waters of baptism, waters that open the hearts of believers and give a voice in the night to those in captivity; waters that set your people on a new path, rejoicing in the Spirit's power. Baptized into you, O Living One,
- C make us one as you are one.
- P Grant us grace, love, and life, O Living One, that our every day is shaped by these waters that give us our very lives in you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One.
- C Amen.

GATHERING HYMN 392 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus (vs. 1,2,5)



Det William C. Des. 1897-1898, alt. Mark: HYPRYDOL, Rawland H. Prichard, 1811-1887.

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





PRAYER OF THE DAY



P Let us pray.

Eternal and all-merciful God, with all the angels and all the saints we laud your majesty and might. By the resurrection of your Son, show yourself to us and inspire us to follow Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME



FIRST READING: Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

Saul (later called Paul) was an ardent persecutor of all who followed the Way of Christ. This reading recounts the story of his transformation beginning with an encounter with Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus.

¹ Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." [⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶ I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, ²⁰ and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."]

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 118:14-29 We sing the psalm responsively.



Leader ¹⁴The Lord is my strength | and my song, and has become | my salvation.

- C ¹⁵ Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents | of the righteous: "The right hand of the | Lord acts valiantly!
- L ¹⁶ The right hand of the Lord | is exalted!

 The right hand of the | Lord acts valiantly!"
- C ¹⁷ I shall not | die, but live, and declare the works | of the Lord.
- L 18 The Lord indeed pun- ished me sorely, but did not hand me o- ver to death.
- C ¹⁹ Open for me the | gates of righteousness; I will enter them and give thanks | to the Lord.
- L ²⁰ "This is the gate | of the Lord; here the righ- | teous may enter."
- C ²¹I give thanks to you, for you have | answered me and you have become | my salvation.
- L ²²The stone that the build- | ers rejected has become the chief | cornerstone.
- C 23 By the Lord has | this been done; it is marvelous | in our eyes.

- L ²⁴ This is the day that the ¹ Lord has made; let us rejoice and be ¹ glad in it.
- C 25 Hosanna! O Lord, save us!
 We pray to you, Lord, pros- per our days!
- L ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name ¹ of the Lord; we bless you from the house ¹ of the Lord.
- C 27 The Lord is God and has giv- | en us light. Form a procession with branches up to the corners | of the altar.
- L ²⁸ You are my God, and ¹ I will thank you; you are my God, and I ¹ will exalt you.
- C ²⁹ Give thanks to the Lord, for the | Lord is good; God's mercy en- | dures forever.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: Revelation 1:4-8

The book of Revelation recounts a mystical vision of the risen Christ experienced by a Christian prophet named John. Here he describes Christ as a timeless redeemer, the beginning, present, and end of all time.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

- R The Word of the Lord.
- C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: John 20:19-31

The unprecedented events of the day of resurrection continue as the risen Jesus appears to his fearful disciples. A week later, after Thomas worships Jesus, Jesus pronounces that the blessings of the resurrection are also for those who "have not seen and yet believe."

- P The holy gospel according to John, the twentieth chapter.
- C Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

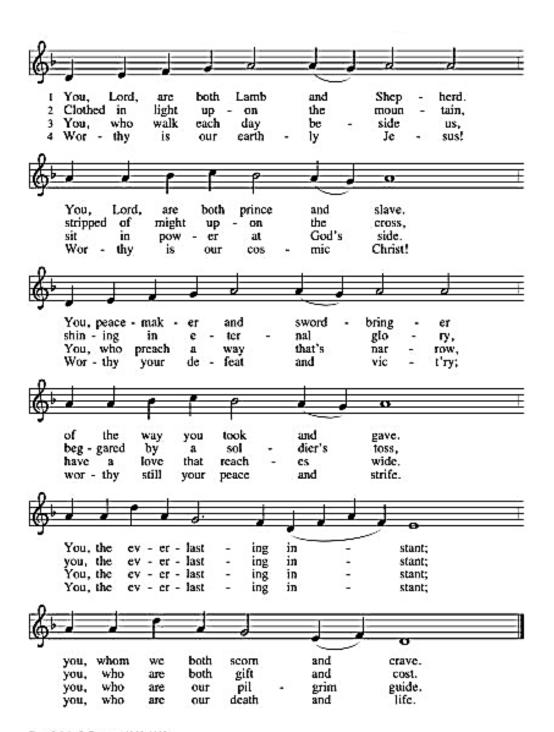
³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

- 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.



Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993 Music: PICARDY, French folk tune, 17th cent. Text ♥ 1991 GIA Publication, Inc., plantasic con. All rights reserved.

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: Hear us, O God.

Congregational response: Your mercy is great.

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.



OFFERING

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

ANTHEM "Now the Green Blade Rises" – arr. Hopson

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain, Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain; Love lives again, that with the dead has been; Love is come again like wheat arising green.

In the grave they laid him, Love by hatred slain, Thinking that he would never wake again, Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen: Love is come again like wheat arising green.

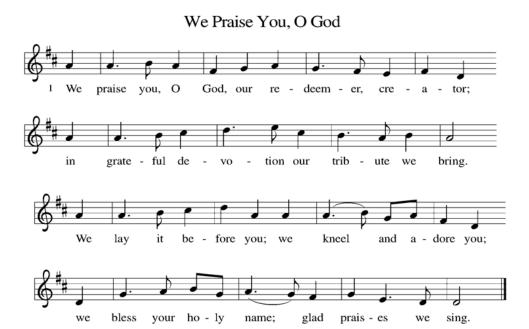
Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain, He that for three days in the grave had lain; Raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen; Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain, Your touch can call us back to life again, Fields of our hearts, that dead and bare have been: Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

OFFERING HYMN

ELW 870 (verse 1)

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



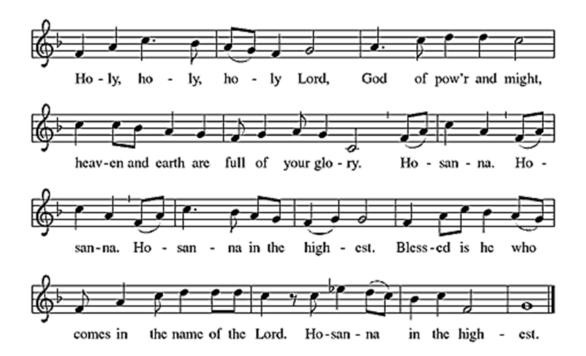
Text: Julia C. Cory, 1882–1963 Music: KREMSER, A. Valerius, Nederlandtsch Gedenckclanck, 1626

GREAT THANKSGIVING

- P The Lord be with you.
- \mathbf{C} And also with you.
- Lift up your hearts. P
- \mathbf{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, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin, who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, 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

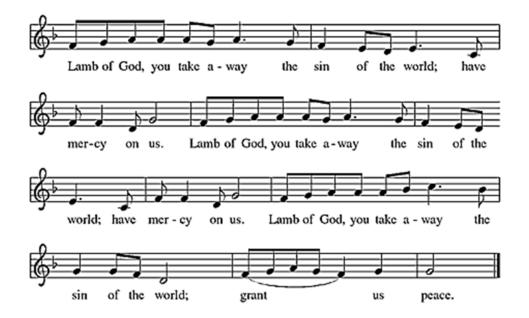
- P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray.
- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Come to the table of grace. Receive the gift of new life.

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 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. If you do not wish to receive the meal, simply fold your arms over your chest to receive a blessing from the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS 854 Blessing and Honor

661 I Love to Tell the Story

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Living One, in this feast you have made yourself known to us. Send us now to tell of your wonders, sing of your glory, and proclaim your risen life to a wounded and weary world.

C Amen.

+ SENDING +

BLESSING We receive the blessings of the triune God.

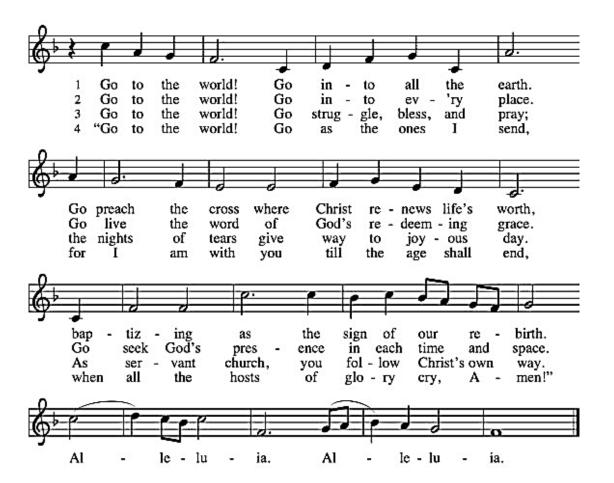
- P The triune God, who was, who is, and who is to come, Sovereign, & Savior, and Spirit, light your way with resurrection dawn, now and always.
- C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

SENDING HYMN ACS 991 Go to the World!



Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955–1993 Music: SINE NOMINE, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958 Text © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved. Music © Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

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 Alleluia! Christ is risen.
- C Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!
- A Go in peace. In Christ you are made new. Alleluia! Alleluia!
- C Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

+ + +

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Calendar for May 4 - 11					
May	04	Sun.	9 am 9:30 am 10 am	Book study Choir practice Worship, Third Sunday of Easter	
	07	Wed.	7 pm	Choir practice	
	11	Sun.	9 am 9:30 am 10 am	Book study Choir practice Worship, Fourth Sunday of Easter	

Next Sunday's Readings, Fourth Sunday of Easter:

Acts 9:36-43 Psalm 23 Revelation 7:9-17 John 10:22-30





This week's altar flowers are given to the glory of God.

SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, 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	May 4	May 11				
Assisting Minister	Colleen Holdcraft	Rob Schiffer				
Cup Minister	Rita Ford	Kirsten Ebbesen				
Cantor	Karl Barton					
Lector	Greeley Family	Colleen Holdcraft				
Acolyte	Ceilia Greeley or Graham Reece or Bastian Stover					
Tech Team	Caroline Collins	Mark Greeley				
Tech Team	Audrey Post	Colin Hackley				
Ushers	Bob Eshleman	Bob Eshleman				
Ushers	Rob Schiffer					
Altar Guild	Linda Eshleman	Lawana Lamb-Daniels				
Altai Gullu	Barbara Sullivan	Sandy Lamb-Daniels				
Counters	Janet Barber	Kirsten Ebbesen				
Counters	Margaret Bowers	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; Jim Saxman (uncle of Rob Schiffer); Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; Craig Timm (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Gil Johnson (friend of Judi Duffy); 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 from 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; 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; Gladys Kane for continued healing; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart).

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 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.