



ST. STEPHEN'S SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

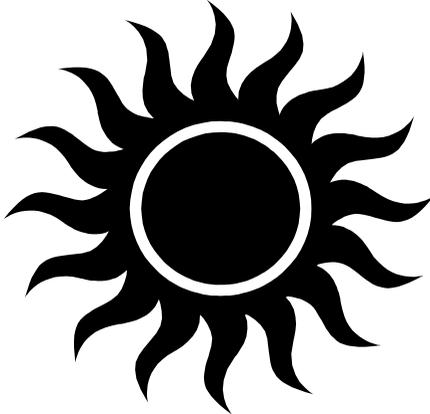
8:15 am Worship Service  
Coffee Hour  
9:30 am Choir rehearsal  
10:30 am Worship Service  
& Sunday School

St Stephen's Lutheran Church  
2500 Soquel Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Non-Profit Org.  
Postage Paid  
Permit #79  
Soquel, CA 95073

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NEWSLETTER WAS SENT ON  
December 21, 2009**

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church



**Sun**

Celebrating 55  
Years of Ministry-  
**January 2010**

**Annual Congregational Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 31 @ 12:00**  
(a light brunch will be served)

We gather together to envision and plan for the future of our church. We will elect leadership, elect two voting members for Synod Assembly, and approve a budget for 2010 that reflects our mission.

Please plan on attending to support your church as we continue to seek God's will for our ministry together. We need @ 40 members to vote. It's ONLY once a year...See you there!

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of America  
 2500 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz, California 95062  
 Phone—831-476-4700 — Fax—831-476-3918  
 www..ststephenslutheran.org  
 email—office@ststephenslutheran.org  
 Rev. James P. Lapp, Pastor

Ministers: The Entire Congregation  
 Church Council: Pres.—Paul Powers, V.P.- Robin Gloe,  
 Sec.— Bill Schraft, Treas.— Mark Linder,  
 Don Smawley, Dan Grow, Scott Medling,  
 Jeanette Dawson, and Jan Wagner  
 Directors of Music: Suzanne Duval & Gary Roberts  
 Custodian: John Hopping  
 Church Administrator: Leslie Lapp  
 Children's Minister: Dusty Gipson

Office Hours: Mon.—Thurs. 8:30am—2:30pm  
 Pastor's Cell Phone: 325-9095  
 (Call Pastor between 9 am and 5 pm, M-Thurs.  
 or anytime for emergencies. Please only give to  
 church members)



MISSION STATEMENT

St. Stephen's is a welcoming, healing community  
 who worship God in Christ,  
 nurture people growing in faith,  
 serve others with acceptance and love,  
 and invite people to share the joy of the Spirit.

(Sister Parish continued)

St. Stephen's (Jill Adachi, Mitch and Joe Ronning, Lisa Johnson and Colin Boyle) will be in the February newsletter.

Ruth & Mike Cruddas: the reason for the date for this particular delegation was for them to see the graduation of their prayer child Karla - a young woman with whom they have had a relationship since 1998. Obviously, seeing her cross the stage was extremely moving. For Mike, the graduation ceremony in general was a highlight; all these years of supporting children through school, and now to actually see a graduation was really exciting. For Ruth, the health clinic was an unexpected experience since she did not expect to participate in it. However, on the first day she spent 3-4 hours painting teeth of young children with fluoride - and the magnitude of teeth damaged by decay and the general poor oral health of children so young could not be called a highlight but was the most eye-opening experience of the trip. There is no question that we will start advocating for regular visits from the Salvadoran dental community!

Chris & Kent Madsen: Our highlights turned out to be very similar (maybe not so surprising after 22 years of marriage?). The graduation was a highlight. Besides those youth graduating from High School, there were youth graduating from ninth grade, and children "graduating" from pre-school and kindergarten. We were very proud to see our prayer child Walter graduate from ninth grade, knowing he plans the 3-year High School path. (High School is normally two years, but Ungo has a 3<sup>rd</sup> year that is Vocational training). Another highlight was a quiet-time talk we had with Walter. He wanted to know what our daily life is like. This may not seem at all significant, but this is the first time in 15 years anyone has asked us anything about our lives. To us, this was a major step forward in trust and our relationship. We also agreed that sharing this experience and watching first-time delegates get involved is always a treat. This year, being able to share this experience with our goddaughter Ariana was a very special experience.



## El Salvador Sister Parish News

The November 2009 delegation to El Salvador, our thirteenth since starting in 1994, is now history — and what a delegation it was!

The 24 delegation members returned home Saturday, November 28. The time we spent with the people of the ciudadela Guillermo Ungo was filled with lots of activities — but also much love and emotion. We heard and saw messages of hope, from the worship service on our arrival day, to the moving graduation ceremony, to the awarding of 2010 scholarships, and finally, to the message from Bishop Medardo Gomez of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod.

There were several firsts on this trip. We held our first clinic days (two of them) where many children and adults were seen by the medical personnel who were part of the delegation -- two doctors, a chiropractor, a physical therapist, two nurses and a nursing assistant. We also had the first movie night. We scheduled two childrens' activity times in addition to the major craft project. Due to the size of the delegation, we split into two groups for many of the meals. This meant that more families could be visited at mealtime. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed time, money or gifts to help make this delegation special.

We spent most of the delegation time in the community (six days) and had a short time in San Salvador on the last full day. Most of us visited some of the important historical sites in the city, while a smaller group visited the San Salvador volcano. Our delegation closed with Bishop Medardo Gomez, his wife Pastor Abelina Gomez and Pastor Martir Vigil sharing their thoughts with us after dinner. Now, we have returned to our daily reality here on the central coast of California, our memories rich with the sights, sounds and experiences of El Salvador.

Some highlights follow. The observations of the other delegates from

## From Pastor Jim...



Well... we got a dog.

Rachel finally broke us down with her persistence and promises. Living close to the Animal Shelter helped considerably, as did Rachel's becoming old enough to finally volunteer there (with parent only). Cali (1 yr. old retriever mix) had been there 2 months and scared potential owners off because of her energy. Fortunately for her she found owners who needed more excuses to get out and walk around the neighborhood and beach more often. This is especially true now that one 45 yr. old person (arthritic hip, repaired ACL and all), can no longer play as much pick-up basketball on concrete as he may want to.

Not only does our new dog bring me physical health benefits, but all that walking provides plenty of time for spiritual reflection as well. It happens both in silence and through the many people I talk to when we're out and about. Specifically, I spoke with one woman who used to attend a Lutheran church as a girl. She was hurt by the fact that as a young girl she was allowed to acolyte but not allowed to go behind the altar. This was reserved for boy acolytes only. The final straw, however, came when she married and got her first dog. She had not been allowed to have a pet in her family as a child. As a huge animal-lover she was ecstatic and brought her dog to church one Sunday and asked her pastor to bless the dog. He promptly refused and walked away.

I was glad to have the opportunity to share the good news that she would find nothing like that at our church. She has recently been thinking about coming back to church so our encounter was good timing. She may not actually ever come, but she did ask ME about when our services were! That never happens.

The point is, we need to remember that we are the light of the world. Sometimes the church has participated in creating the darkness that keeps people against organized religion. We are called to SHINE the light of God's grace that is so often hidden by our own fears and inaction.

The season of Epiphany encourages us to be out there in the world, outside of our familiar territories (like the Magi) sharing our gifts so the world may see the Light. Let's remember that we really do have a lot of good news to share about our church and that people may just be waiting for us to tell them about it!

## January Happenings

### Church Council

Next meeting: Jan 11 @ 7-9 pm

### Habitat for Humanity Lunches

Tuesday, Jan 12 @ 10:30 am

### Story Book Tea

January 17 @ 2:30 Fireside Room

### Faith-full Families

January 24 @ 11:45 St. Stephen's

### Knitting

Meets every Thursday at 6:45 pm

### Game Night

Sun. Jan. 3rd @ 5:30 pm

### Scotts Valley Bible Study

Meets the 1st and 3rd Fridays,  
Jan 8 & 22 ~ at 10 am  
Spring Lakes Park Party Room  
Contact Marshall Bautz 439-8979

### Women's Combined Circles

MM / RR meet 1st Thurs. of each  
month Jan. 7 at Noon  
~ Contact: Renie 426-3259

### Youth Group & Confirmation Class

Sundays 6-8p beginning January 31

### Benevolence Offering

St. Stephen's Homeless Ministry

## Council Highlights

1. Devotions reminded us that we are the "light of the world" as the living Body of Christ-the church. We welcomed the Light in the Christ child, but now WE have that light and are called to shine it in the places of darkness in our world .
2. Pastor Jim received a draft Letter of Intent from Jan Lindenthal of Mid-Peninsula Housing Corporation. Our Field Task Force will now review it and work on a final draft to begin a more formal working relationship. We will also begin working with the COPA Housing Strategy Team to begin planning our approach to the County Planning Department and Supervisor Leopold for approval for 27 units of affordable senior housing on our field.
3. We have received about 40 pledges for a total of \$113,000 in commitments to God for our ministry through our church. This represents about 30% of our households. Follow-up will be taking place during January.

### Financials for Jan-Nov 2009

Envelopes giving =	\$155,712.90
Budget =	\$172,333
Total Revenues =	\$206,438.45
Total budgeted rev =	\$225,686
Expenditures =	\$208,658.86
Budgeted exp =	\$226,343.68
Net income =	-2,220.41
Budgeted net income =	-656.73

## **Why Our Offerings Are Important:**

### **“Empowered by God — Responding by Grace”**

A Christian business owner once observed, “I would rather do business with a non-Christian any day than with a Christian.” His statement was a descriptive commentary on a sad state in the lives of some Christians who fail to pay their bills or to deal with their debts as promised.

A debt simply represents a promise to pay. Nothing more. Nothing less. Whether the debt is to purchase a car, a house, braces for the kids' teeth, or to facilitate a purchase by using a credit card, the issue is the same. By creating a debt, we also create simultaneously an obligation and promise to pay.

Larry Burkett wrote this, “To define debt is not simple, but basically, it's an obligation to pay that can't be kept. . . .Probably forty percent of all American families are in debt in a typical year. They're unable to make the monthly payments on the money they borrowed. Many actually borrow more money to make payments on the money they've already borrowed.”

We who are Christians — of all people — should pay our debts, not only for our reputations and personal integrity, but also because what we do is a direct reflection on our Lord. Or as the Apostle Paul expressed it so clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, we are to behave properly towards people who are outside the family of God and outside His church.

Psalm 37:21 says that to borrow (to create a debt) and then not repay it is wrong. But on a positive note, this same verse also says that the person who is righteous shows mercy by repaying debts and by giving to the needs of others.

By the way, do people know you're a Christian by how you pay your bills and by how you give to others?



# New Youth Program Begins!

Lydia Curry, who grew up in our church and has a deep appreciation for the small youth group she had, has volunteered to help lead our youth group! However, in order to not have her efforts wasted we will need commitments from the parents of our youth that they will support the program by making every effort to have their youth participate in the planned activities and events. Sooo... there is a:

## Mandatory Parent Meeting (7th-12th) Sunday January 10 at 7p.m.

At this meeting we will discuss the plan for the youth program and determine if there is the support for this effort. The program will consist of a Sunday evening (6-8pm) gathering for dinner (provided by parents rotating responsibilities) a group activity, then dividing into a confirmation (7th-8th) small group led by Pastor Jim , and an older discussion group led by Lydia.

## Sunday Night Youth /Confirmation Begins January 31st 6-8pm

There will also be a monthly activity/service project which will include a snow retreat and any Youth Gatherings that may come up. In the summer, there will be a longer service trip planned and fundraisers to help some youth who may want to visit our sister parish in El Salvador with the next delegation. We'll be open to working with other local churches and may plan some joint events. Questions? Call Pastor Jim—325-9095

# Sunday School News

Dear Sunday School Families,

2010 is here and I am so excited about the activities and lessons that are planned for our students this year.

This month we will be doing lots of fun things. Check the schedule below and see if you might be interested in helping out with any of these activities.

- January 3: Epiphany and Three Kings Day
- January 10: Paint-reflections on Epiphany
- January 17: Who in the world? Imagine the Future Now
- January 24: The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)
- January 31: Begin new song, start Valentine making

Please mark your calendars for Sunday February 14th. We will be distributing Valentine cards to senior citizens at the Driftwood Healthcare Center after church. I will pass along more info as we get closer.

I hope you all enjoyed our annual Christmas Pageant this year. The kids worked so hard to make it a special performance for our congregation. Thanks to all who helped behind the scenes to make it a success, especially Candace Anderson and Leslie Lapp. Without the help of parents and church members we would not be able to offer these fun activities for our kids.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dusty Gipson

831-338-3787 home or [dustygipson@yahoo.com](mailto:dustygipson@yahoo.com)

