

## ST. STEPHEN'S WORSHIP SERVICE

Ready for your participation each Sunday morning.  
"Together in Spirit"

Worship in the comfort of your own home.

Go to the recording at [www.stephenslutheran.org](http://www.stephenslutheran.org)

*(Print the bulletin and Celebrate so you can read, sing  
and pray with Pastor Jim. Have some bread and  
wine/grape juice ready for Holy Communion)*

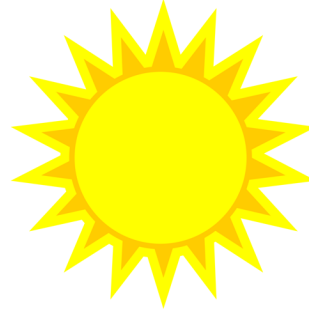
**NEWSLETTER WAS SENT ON**  
December 30, 2020

**POST OFFICE:  
DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY**

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

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Permit #7079  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060-9998

*St. Stephen's Lutheran Church*



***Sun***  
***January 2021***

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**SUNDAY, JAN. 31 @ 11:00 AM**

**VIA ZOOM**  
(watch for email link)

We gather together to elect leadership to council, elect voting members for Synod Assembly, and approve a budget for 2021 that reflects our mission. Please plan on attending to support your church as we continue to seek God's will for our ministry together.

***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. — Renee Rice V.P.— Robert Bartee  
 Secretary - Jay Johnston Treasurer— Kent Madsen  
 David Balogh, Bill Schraft, Alyssa Burkhardt,  
 Paul Cunningham, and Steven Hendrickson

Director of Music: Gary Roberts

Sunday School: Leslie Lapp

Pre-School Director: Kathy Berens

Custodian: John Hopping

Church Administrator: Leslie Lapp

Office Open: Mon.—Thurs. 8:30am—2:30pm

Pastor Jim's Office Hours — Weds. & Thurs. 10 am to 1 pm

#### **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.

#### **VISION STATEMENT**

To become an energetic, inclusive, multigenerational, multicultural, missional community that offers, hope, joy, worship, service, play, and life as disciples of Jesus Christ

# Birthdays & Anniversaries

1-1 Nathan Lapp	1-17 Emily Valencia	
1-9 Esdras Garden	1-18 Patty Travers	
1-10 Colby Hanson	1-21 Chris Turzo	
1-11 Mitch Crews	1-23 Diane Hintz	1-24 Lindsey & Becky
1-12 Linda Hix	1-25 Neil Crews	Cramer
1-13 Jennifer Robe	1-26 Iris Colclough	
1-14 Sofia Bartee	1-26 John Wickham	
1-16 Ellie Russell		



**Short Term:** Healthcare workers, teachers, Grace & Herb Schmidt, Joanne Freymuth, Janet Keighley, The Wickham Family, Kent, Donna, Betsy, Tom, Anna, Krispa, Patsy, Zachary, Family of Al Mitchell, Family of Cheryl Denny, Jean Patterson, Frank Giammona, Heather, Kevin, Vanessa, Rose, Shelly Barker family, Sam, George Webber & Family, Cox Family, Becky & Aaron Johnson, Lorraine Chavez, Lora Schraft Poulson, Nelleke, Hendrick, Kayla, Don, Lina, Sal, Katarina, Taiyo, Mateo, Stephanie Jager, Cabel, Miller, Kyle, Noah, Esdras, Jackson, Immigrant families, The Homeless, Our Nation's leaders, Mt. Cross, St. Stephen's Child Development Ctr, Pastor Jim and Our Church Family. **Long Term:** The Sanders Family, Linda Johnson, Bailey Ingalls, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, John B., Michelle, Josh, CJ, Jeff Tarantino, Susan Anderson, Rick, Bobbie Erickson, Edna Lindquist, Richard C., Eric VonSchell, Lauri Hollist, Ken Pahel, Pat M., Gary, Brouse Family, Janet Baker, Sandy Godvine, Janelle Yung, Barry & Barbara, Chris & Lorie Juhl, Karin, Will, Chris, Pat Hubbard, Cathy, Pearl Runquist, Volpi & Robe Family, men and women of Armed Forces, and the Youth of today.

## El Salvador Sister Parish News

Welcome to the sister parish corner, with news and updates on the work with our companion communities in El Salvador, **Guillermo Ungo** and **El Pilar**.

# Thank you!

Thank you, members of St. Stephen's, for your generosity in support of our work in El Salvador.

As of this writing, shortly before Christmas, you have made the following contributions:

\$1,150 in sponsorships for students in the Guillermo Ungo school

\$450 in contributions toward the University Scholarship Fund

\$310 for the November special benevolence.



Kent Madsen  
For Santa Cruz al Salvador

*from Pastor Jim*



Not bad for a mobile, outdoor set-up for Christmas Eve worship. I even got the right color altar parament! It was very inspiring and refreshing to be together in-person and hear our singing and praying and greetings for an hour. Although the sun had just gone behind the clouds an hour before, it was relatively warm and only a slight breeze. I only had to relight the Christ Candle on the Advent Wreath one time.

Most of all, we joined our spirits here and through the recorded service to remember one of our central stories that provides so much meaning and direction in our lives: That Love Has Come, and came in a way that drew us ever nearer to God, and revealed once and for all that God's Love overcomes all that the world throws at us.

As we move into 2021 (THANKS BE TO GOD!!!), we have a lot to be grateful for and look forward to. At some point we will be gathering regularly at 2500 Soquel Ave again as we praise God for the gift of those who are using their skills to produce and distribute a vaccine that will provide a great deal of safety against this unseen enemy that changed so much of our lives this past year.

It will still be many months before it is safe enough to start to return to some of the ways that we are used to being the church. But, as we have seen, in the meantime there are still many ways to follow God's call in our lives and continue to fulfill our mission. I have especially been especially grateful for our Thursday Bible Studies! It has been so uplifting to share insights about God's Word with so many of you.



## Council Highlights

1. Pastor Jim spent most of his report updating the Council on how many of our church family are doing. He and the Sustainability Committee spent some time last month contacting most people in our church. It is difficult to continue building the kind of relational faith community we strive to always be, so phone contacting and having a conversation about how we have seen God's Spirit working in our lives is one of the only ways we can try to maintain our fellowship. Everyone was encouraged to reach out as much as possible to connect with one another as we continue waiting for the vaccine to be widely distributed.
2. Pastor Jim participated with several other pastors and musicians from churches in our El Camino Conference of our Sierra Pacific Synod, in recording a special 1st Sunday of Christmas (Dec. 27) worship Service of Lessons and Carols. It was coordinated by Pr. Manda Truchinski of Christ the Good Shepherd in San Jose (where Rev. Roy Hoch is interred, and where Mark Linder was a former leader). It is still available on our website and includes Pastor Jim's reading of Genesis Ch. 1 set to footage of Branciforte Creek near an old growth redwood a little downstream from where Lew and Bobbie Erickson live in their historic "brothel" house! Also there is footage of one of our magnificent winter sunsets at Natural Bridges State Beach. Then Pastor Jim offers the carol "I Wonder As I Wander" with a verse that he wrote especially for this past year that we all have endured together. It uses some of the beauty of our sanctuary at Christmastime.
3. The Annual Meeting was planned for Sunday January 31 at 11:00am. The only way it can take place this year is using the Zoom Meeting program that the church subscribes to. The budget will sent out by Sunday, January 17 by email and also by regular mail to those without email.
4. Church Council members David Balogh, Jay Johnston and Kent Madsen have served or filled in for their 3 year terms and were thanked for their service. David Balogh has served 2 terms and is not eligible to be elected again. Jay is prayerfully considering if he will be nominated again. Kent has agreed to be nominated for a second 3yr. Term.

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## Reconciled In Christ Welcome Statement

(Approved at January 2020 Congregational Meeting)

**"We welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace.**

**We welcome all because God welcomes all,  
regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation,  
gender identity, gender expression, or relationship status.**

**We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health,  
imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances,  
or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Christ."**

## *Delight Ministry with Nelleke Meerman*

Wow almost half way through my time working for delight-how time flies!!

### TRAVEL:

- October ended with a trip to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.
- November was very special. The first half of it was filled with visiting my schools in the Pacific Northwest: Oregon State University, George Fox University & Seattle University.

I know for many of you, this has been an extremely tough year. December may not feel quite as joyful as usual, I am in that boat with you. Here are some words, from Morgan Harper Nichols, that warmed my heart. I hope these words inspire you too.

*"As we near the end of a tragic and traumatic year—may we be held in health, may we be blessed with rest, recovery, reconciliation, romance, and spiritual resilience"*

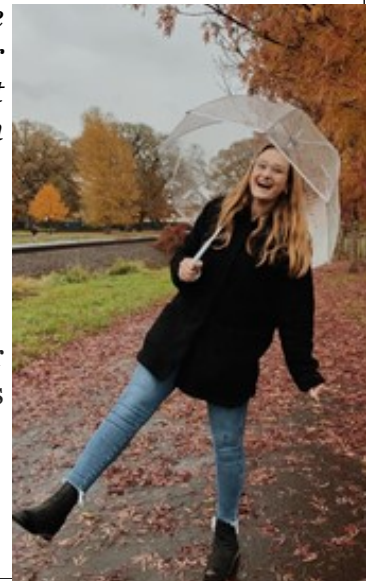
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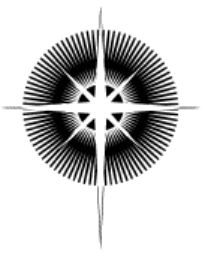
*"Here is to December. A month of: Celebrating how far we have come. Reflecting on all we have learned this year. Knowing we are not alone if we are grieving or hurting this season. Remembering that even if there are 100 things to do, we are not wrong for needing time for rest and regroup. Being grateful for things both great and small. Believing that some of the best gifts we can give are our time, empathy and love."*

PLEASE LET ME KNOW ANY WAYS I CAN BE  
PRAYING FOR YOU!

Thank you for being here, for supporting me and for following along with this journey. You are in my thoughts and prayers!!

Blessings, Nelleke (831) 421-2645  
[nmeerman@delightministries.com](mailto:nmeerman@delightministries.com)



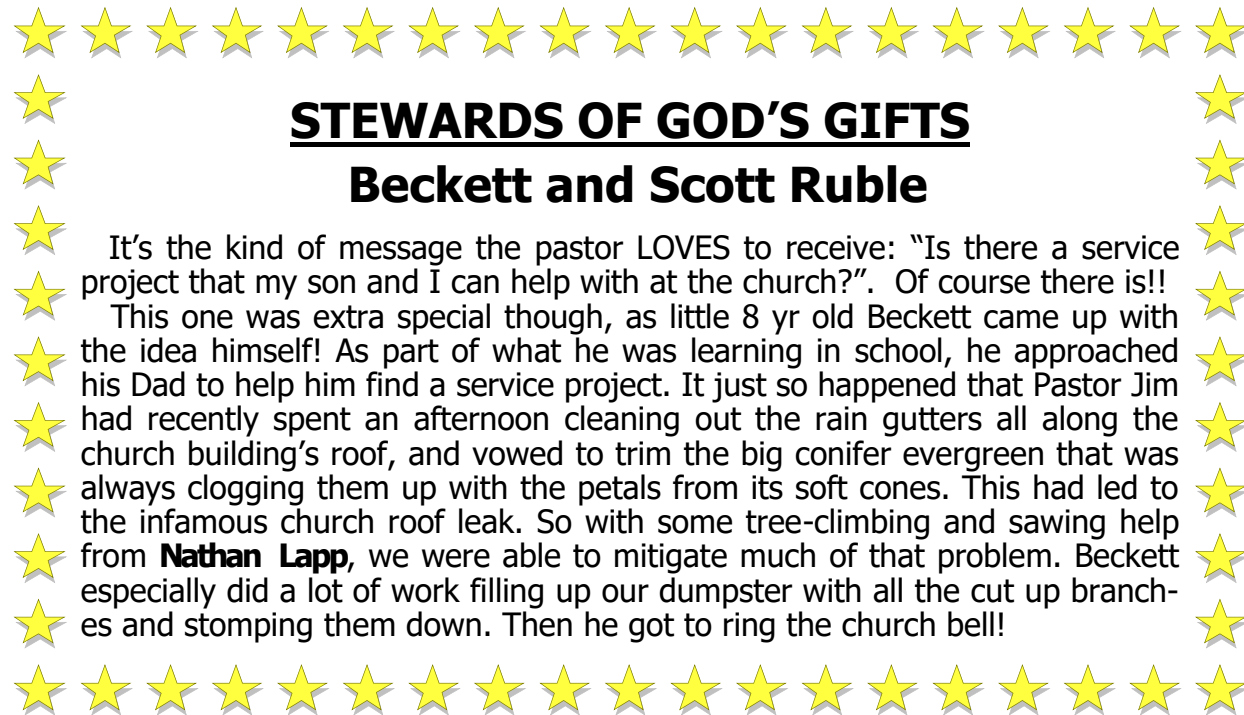


## Epiphany

. . . Means “to show” or “to make known.” It was first observed in the East as a feast commemorating Jesus’ baptism as an adult. Later it became a celebration of Christ being made known to the Gentiles, beginning with the Wisemen (Magi) who came from the East to worship the Christ child. Another theme of Epiphany is God’s light overcoming the darkness of evil and sin.

The color of Epiphany Day is white for light and purity. The Baptism and the Transfiguration of Jesus are celebrated during this season, so white is a reminder of Baptism robes and the gleaming white color of Jesus’ clothes when he went up the mountain of transfiguration. On other Sundays in Epiphany the color is green.

The star that guided the wisemen to Bethlehem is a symbol of Epiphany.

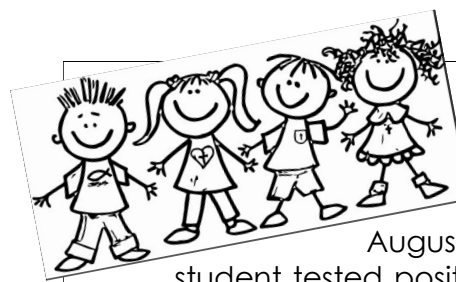


## **STEWARDS OF GOD’S GIFTS**

### **Beckett and Scott Ruble**

It’s the kind of message the pastor LOVES to receive: “Is there a service project that my son and I can help with at the church?”. Of course there is!!

This one was extra special though, as little 8 yr old Beckett came up with the idea himself! As part of what he was learning in school, he approached his Dad to help him find a service project. It just so happened that Pastor Jim had recently spent an afternoon cleaning out the rain gutters all along the church building’s roof, and vowed to trim the big conifer evergreen that was always clogging them up with the petals from its soft cones. This had led to the infamous church roof leak. So with some tree-climbing and sawing help from **Nathan Lapp**, we were able to mitigate much of that problem. Beckett especially did a lot of work filling up our dumpster with all the cut up branches and stomping them down. Then he got to ring the church bell!



## **Child Development Center**

Happy New Year! We were operating very well from August 3 until December 10th when we received notice that a student tested positive for Covid-19. A week before, Pastor Jim asked if the children could wear their Friendly Beast costumes to chapel for fun. I asked if we could record them for the Christmas Eve service and invite our school families to view and share our children with you. We were to record before Christmas break. I received the call right before rehearsal Chapel. Leslie suggested we make the most of what we had at the moment. We dressed up the children and let them scatter across the stage with their masks on. They were delighted with the spontaneity and fun. Pastor Jim accompanied them with his guitar as they sang “The Friendly Beasts!” Leslie and I took a moment to look at each other and acknowledge the blessing before us. That was our moment of a peaceful and delightful time during all that had been different for so many months. A team effort and some faith created an opportunity for us to share with you our hope for the future and the magic of a moment in worship with children.

As we begin a new year the Child Development Center continues to pivot with the changes of Covid-19. We closed on December 10th and plan to reopen on January 11th.

In February we raised tuition to meet the demands of having a lower enrollment. We are still one of the most affordable preschools in Santa Cruz County. We plan to increase enrollment as 3 siblings turn 2 and will attend our toddler program beginning in February or March. We look forward to Spring and returning to many activities we have had to put aside in 2020.

Thank you very much to all who contributed to the October Benevolence donation for our preschool. It was very helpful in keeping our staff paid during the closure. We appreciate your generosity!

So, 2021 will be the new beginning, at a familiar place, with the return of friendly faces. Certain aspects of this time have taught us many new and better ways to run the school. It has also pointed out what the most important activities will be to bring back. I hope for you the same for your lives, and a peaceful and healthy New Year!

Warmly, Kathy Berens



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

We are in the midst of an extraordinary and hopeful time. In the past two days, millions of doses of a vaccine that will help save lives and end this COVID-19 pandemic have begun arriving throughout our country, and in many places around the world. It reminds me of a time when I was five years old, and was told we had to go to my school to receive medicine that would keep me from getting sick. The medicine was in a sugar cube, and the Polio vaccine developed by Dr. Jonas Salk and Dr. Albert Sabin was a breakthrough that changed the world. I believe we are in a similar time now.

Advent is the season of Hope. The lessons and songs of Advent speak to us "in the bleak midwinter" of the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption, salvation and peace. This year, we receive this hopeful news even as we mourn the deaths of more than 300,000 people in this country from COVID-19, even as intensive care units are now filled to capacity in many parts of our synod's territory, even as we know we are months away from life returning to "normal" because enough people have been vaccinated to ensure broad immunity. We receive this hopeful news trusting that Christ, our physician and healer, is present in the developers of vaccines and in health care providers who are working in impossible conditions and in front line workers who continue to serve among us, and in our ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are cared for.

Blessings as we move through this very different Advent and into what will be a very different, and I pray blessed celebration of Christmas. Who knows what we might learn from such a time as this that will move us forward in faith to live beyond this time of pandemic? The day I received that sugar cube of hope took on new meaning many years later when my mother told me how she had been infected with Polio as a child, along with both of her siblings. Though the only long-lasting effect she dealt with was "post-polio syndrome" later in life, I can only imagine the hope she felt watching me receive a gift that would spare me from something that had affected her and so many others. This, to me, is a story of the hope of Advent.

Be well. Be safe. Blessings for Christmas and beyond.

Peace,  
Bp. Mark Holmerud

## Benevolence Donations (Individual and Church)

2020 through November	
Am. Fdn. Suicide Prevention	\$305
SS Scholarships	\$380
Live Oak Resource Center	\$245
Habitat for Humanity	\$470
Mt. Cross	\$410
World Hunger	\$245
Housing Matters	\$315
CLU/PLTS	\$335
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$485
SS CDC	\$1,080
El Salvador Sister Parish	\$470
Lutheran World Relief	\$0
ELCA Synod	\$750
COPA	\$1,500
Lutheran Immigration	\$0
Total	\$6,990
2020 Benevolence Target (10%)	\$14,658
% of Target	48%





Treasurer Notes ...  
 Budget Information · November 2020

	November	November	YTD	YTD	Net
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
Contribution Income	\$12,122	\$11,833	\$131,072	\$133,152	\$-2,180
Facility Use Income *	\$1,378	\$1,535	\$11,186	\$16,880	\$-5,694
Investment Income	\$3,009	\$3,750	\$40,882	\$41,250	\$-368
Total Income	\$16,509	\$17,118	\$183,141	\$191,382	\$-8,242
Expenses	\$17,206	\$18,542	\$206,517	\$213,412	\$-6,895
Net	\$-697	\$-1,424	\$-23,376	\$-22,030	\$-1,347

\* Includes Child Development Center facility use @ \$300/month + Miscellaneous Income. Contribution income for November was above budget (thank you!), but we continue to fall behind with Facility Use Income; we’re helped by somewhat lower expenses, but still running with a deficit larger than expected. A Paycheck Protection Program loan in the amount of \$59,300 was granted to St. Stephen’s and the Child Development Center.

While the church is closed to fight the coronavirus pandemic, our expenses continue. Thank you to those who have mailed contributions or made them online on our website.

Special funds for the Organ, Piano, Hearing Impaired  
 and Solar Electricity

	November	Reserve	Needed to Payoff
Organ	\$20	\$260	
Piano	\$-195	\$95	
Hearing Impaired Equip	\$0	\$395	
Solar Electric Payback	\$136		\$15,356

Provide Lunches for Volunteers  
 Tuesday, January 26  
 (4th Tuesday of each month)

Contact church office if you can provide  
 Sandwiches, Fruit, Chips or Cookies



Thursday Bible Studies

Zoom with Pastor Jim  
 (check email on Weds. for link)  
 11am -12noon and 7:30 pm—8:30 pm (new time)

We will be looking at the upcoming scripture readings for Sunday, to enrich our worship experience and uncover some of the deeper truths of our faith. As we grow in our faith, we grow in community.

Monthly Special Benevolence Offering

January—Society for the Prevention of Suicide

is the leader in the fight against suicide. To fully achieve its mission, AFSP engages in the following Five Core Strategies:

- #1 Fund scientific research
- #2 Offer educational programs for professionals
- #3 Educate the public about mood disorders and suicide prevention
- #4 Promote policies and legislation that impact suicide and prevention
- #5 Provide programs and resources for survivors of suicide loss and people at risk, and involve them in the work of the Foundation

December—Lutheran World Relief = \$ 100

(as of Dec. 28)

## Greetings from Rachel Lapp in Ethiopia!

Life has been all over the place for me, as it has been for many people in 2020. In 2018 I accepted a position in Peace corps Ethiopia as an agriculture and nutrition volunteer excited for a new challenge and community. I try to have no expectations when I start a trip so I can be more open to what I am given, but I was delighted with the thought of being around like minded people who had traveled, valued being uncomfortable and had developed more of a global mindset. Of course this turned out to largely not be the case. It became more of a solo endeavor, I wasn't very confident in the organization's ability to help me, but had a few friends in the peace corps that I could rely on and that had to be enough. I made friends quickly in my village and loved hanging out, drinking coffee (Coffee is native to Ethiopia) and preparing various foods. My best friend's name is Zaudy. She is a young mom of two and is connected to everyone in the village. We had a ton of fun together, she took care of me when I was sick, and we always made each other laugh.

I was placed in one of the most rural sites in Ethiopia, on a peninsula sandwiched by two huge gorges, only comparable to a smaller grand canyon. It was stunning, with the change of seasons the landscape transformed, and the wildlife changed. Mountain goats, monkeys, wolves, huge birds, and hyenas. Ethiopia holds 80% of Africa's mountains and is a tiny fraction of the continent, most of the country is above 8,000 feet of elevation. It's fantastic, but you get all of the extremes. Huge lightning storms that you watch strike the ground, wind that makes trees bend in half, rain that turns into water falls and sun that soaks up every drop of liquid. Life was so very exciting, with no english speakers, no cell phone service (except that one spot on the cliff), no electricity and no running water, daily life was an endeavor. My village was about 40 houses, everyone was a farmer and life entirely depended on the seasons as all the agriculture was rain fed. Daily life consisted of cooking breakfast, walking long distances to farmers residence or project sites, being fed lunch three or four times, walking back, afternoon chores and hanging out, buna ceremony (coffee), evening walks on the cliff and when the season was right monkey duty. When the crops are in full bloom (mostly wheat and tef) the children line the cliffs watching the herds of 100+ Gelada monkeys making sure they don't invade the crops. The monkey population actually outweighs the human population, I was delighted that monkey watching was considered a job.

I worked at the government farmer training center with a variety of experts doing demonstrations and projects. I spent time listening, observing, asking questions and trying to understand how things worked and how I fit. Resources were limited and everything depended on when the rains would come. There was also a huge problem with soil erosion. The land was bare for most of the year and the wind took whatever nutrients were left, starting a terrible cycle of imported expensive fertilizers degrading the soil further. Almost all of the land was dedicated to farming. There were small areas of brush and trees and those were constantly being harvested for wood fuel. So, I wrote a grant titled sustainable reforestation. I worked with my local counterpart Yekuno Amlak to create a three fold project. The first part of the project was to promote and install 20 at home biogas plants capturing the off gassing of human and animal waste and then using those gases to light a kitchen stove and lamp. This would in theory diminish the amount of forest being cut, reduce smoke inhalation, give women excess time for other activities, provide a natural free compost for the fields, give students a light to do homework at night and would increase sanitation of human and animal waste. The hope was that people would see the

benefits of those gifted the biogas plants and would choose to invest in them instead of chemical fertilizers. The next part of the grant was to incentivize reforestation and preservation of natural spaces. Bee keeping is a very lucrative but dangerous business in Ethiopia. Bees need a variety of flowering plants to survive and if they don't have them, the hive swarms and in most cases is deadly. So we planned to work with bee farmers to start at home native tree nurseries giving bee keepers the power to invest in their own business. We also planned to construct new hives that were safer and would yield more honey. I was also working with women in my community to improve women's health by making reusable menstrual pads. Thanks to donations from members of St. Stephen's 40 girls and women in my community were able to make reusable pads, with plans to work with 1,500 girls. I had partnered with Mekana Yesus (Lutheran German NGO) and was working with 4 schools to teach girls health. We led classes on various subjects and were prepping materials to make the reusable pads. But then the corona virus hit and I had less than 24 hours to pack up my life, projects say goodbye to friends and travel to the capital.

My boyfriend dropped everything and came to my village to help. He helped me translate what I could not communicate and ensured he would look after my projects and check on things while I was gone. We trusted that the people I was working with would finish what we started. Then somehow I ended up back in Santa Cruz a year early, not sure what to do with myself. It happened to be salmon season in Alaska, so I scrambled to get a job and went back to Kodiak to work on a salmon seiner. I was fortunate to escape a lot of the trouble Corona brought, by being in yet another place where the animal population outweighed the human population, but this time it was bears. It was a blessing to be removed from society out on a boat. I was on my 20 ft skiff for 11+ hours a day watching currents, sea life and wind, moving one end of a net hoping to catch as many salmon as the ocean wanted to give us each day. It was wild and crazy, maddening and full of fun, but it was the perfect thing for the time.

I was a bit of a mess trying to figure out my emotions after being evacuated from Ethiopia and leaving many people that I love but also trying to stay safe and focused among the many dangers of the pacific ocean and commercial fishing. I was able to save some money and as the season ended I booked a ticket back to Ethiopia to finish some unfinished business. My family and friends were able to come to the island and we had a grand adventure running around in rain gear catching silver salmon coming upstream to spawn, dodging bears in the surf and sharing memories. I have now been living in Ethiopia for over a month, riding it out seeing how the cards will fall. I feel like Corona has given me the gift of time and I am letting myself be and feel what my next move should be. I visited my village and found 17 of the 20 biogas plants complete. The reusable pad supplies had been used by the schools, we hope that knowledge will keep being passed on. It was great to know that my trust was not misplaced and that people followed through despite unforeseeable variables. That gave me some much needed closure. There are some funds left over from the pad project and I plan on working with Mekana Yesus to start another pad project in the city. When I think about how my crazy life ended up here, I always give credit to St Stephens. I traveled without my family to El Salvador with a delegation, went to Rwanda as a part of the Synod and then moved to CLU and that same love and support from our congregation followed. The people I have met along the way have encouraged my curiosity and desire to have a more global inclusive and sustainable mindset as I figured out what best ways I can serve God's creation. Thank you all for being a part of my family and providing me with so many blessings.