

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**

(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)

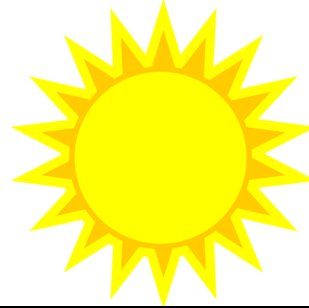
NEWSLETTER WAS SENT ON
November 29, 2021

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

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St. Stephen's Lutheran Church



SUN

December 2021

The Season of Advent

Sundays **Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 12 & 19** at 10:00 am
Advent means “coming”. It is a season of preparation. We prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. This is a joyous time when God’s people join in the excitement, anticipation, and enthusiasm of the sights and sounds of the holiday season. We will observe the tradition of lighting the Advent Wreath and adorning the tree with the Chrismons (Christian symbols) We will also pray for those who may not have a church home with the intention of inviting them to Christmas Eve Service.

Christmas Eve Worship

Friday, Dec. 24
5:00 pm & 7:30 pm

A recorded Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be available on our website.



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 - Alyssa Burkhardt
Treasurer— Kent Madsen
Shelly Barker, Bill Schraft, Jay Johnston,
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.—Fri. 12:00—5:00 pm (new hours)
Pastor Jim's Contact Hours — Mon.—Thurs. 9am—5pm at 831-325-9095

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

12-2 Ken Gross	12-26 Shay Barsabe	
12-6 Don Smawley	12-28 Brad Tuttle	12-04 Peggy & Phil Crews
12-7 Donald Daves	12-31 Paul	
12-8 Maryann Hurttgam	Cunningham	12-04 John & Kathy Hopping
12-14 Sheryl Brouse	12-31 Jeanette	
12-15 Robert Bartee	Dawson	
12-18 Leslie Ruble	12-31 Dusty Gipson	12-22 Chris & Lorie Juhl
12-20 Stefan Meek		



SHORT TERM: Tyler Slay, Family of Rick Oldfield, Family of Ron Buswell, Family of Edna Lindquist, Barb R., Don S., Trace & Clare, Chris & Patty, Gaye Cornell, Harriet Edsall, Joe & Ali, Dorothy, Laura, Gerardo's Family, Family of Jean Petersen, Family of Betty Kievlan, Bobbie Erickson, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Jane Davis, Kirsten Skiles, Healthcare workers, teachers, Jane, Nancy, Marisa, Margot Wilson, Rose, Sam, Aaron Johnson, Don, Lina, Sal, Katarina, Taiyo, Mateo, Stephanie Jager, Cabel, Miller, Noah, Esdras, Immigrant families, The Homeless, Our Nation's leaders, Mt. Cross, St. Stephen's Child Development Ctr, Pastor Jim & Our Church Family.

LONG TERM: Kyle Lapp, Jan Wagner, The Sanders Family, Linda Johnson, Bailey Ingalls, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, John B., Michelle, Josh, CJ, Susan Anderson, Richard C., Brouse Family, Janet Baker, Sandy Godvine, Janelle Yung, Chris & Lorie Juhl, Karin, Will, Chris, Pearl Runquist, Volpi & Robe Family, Dawit & Family (Ethiopia), men and women of Armed Forces, and the Youth of today.



El Salvador Sister Parish News

Virtual Fundraiser 2.0:

Thanks again to all who donated to our Virtual Fundraiser! As of this writing, we have raised over \$18,000 toward our projects. The Santa Cruz al Salvador Board of Directors has decided to allocate \$11,000 of those proceeds to University

Scholarships for Guillermo Ungo students and the remainder of \$7,000+ to composting latrines for El Pilar. We are moving ahead with construction of 12 more latrines to bring the total to 83, our original commitment.

The drawing for the Monterey Bay excursion on the "Salty Sheep" was held on November 1, 2021 at the Board of Directors meeting and Marilyn Minke of Christ Lutheran Church in Aptos was the winner! Other items have been delivered.

Prayer Child Sponsorships - Sponsorship renewal has been delayed to December. We will be doing this by e-mail again this year, so watch for an e-mail from Santa Cruz al Salvador with your electronic Commitment Card. We will be collecting your donations as well as a contribution for the locally-sourced gift baskets for the student families. Last year was the first time we did this, replacing the gift bags we collected and took to El Salvador with our January delegations. The gift baskets were very well received, thanks to your extra contributions.

January 2022 Delegation - Due to ongoing health concerns about international travel in this time of Covid-19, we will **not** be sponsoring a delegation in January 2022. We are considering a summer-time trip, but there is nothing firm at this time.

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Santa Cruz al Salvador (SCaS), I wish to thank all members of St. Stephen's who have contributed towards any of our projects such as the latrines in El Pilar, scholarships in Guillermo Ungo, or University Scholarships. Your gifts make a difference!

Peace in Christ,

Kent Madsen, St. Stephen's representative on the SCaS Board of Directors

Peace in Christ,
Kent Madsen, St. Stephen's

from Pastor Jim

Stir Up!



This wonderful and very direct Advent phrase will be the one that we pray each Sunday as our Prayer of the Day. In Latin it is: *excita*. So that gives us a clue that something very uplifting and positive is meant to be conveyed.

This short, 4 Sunday season is always about preparing for the coming of God as one of us in Christ on Christmas. This year especially, it is clear that the best preparation is to "**Stir Up!**" something in our lives and church and world.

What is God stirring up in you these days? How will you join with God's Spirit in this kind of anticipation for something that needs to and will happen?

In our family's life, we are attempting to Stir Up something that is very daunting and has been a constant source of frustration: our son-in-law's ability to be rejoined with his spouse Rachel and his meeting his daughter for the first time in-person.

He has been approved to receive his Spousal Visa after his final interview on Dec. 30th at the US Embassy in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. However, simmering centuries-old ethnic conflicts have led the US Embassy to evacuate much of its staff and visas are no longer being processed. So his date to receive the visa is now postponed indefinitely.

We are reaching out to as many people as possible to Stir Up! the system and see if there is any way for him to be able to receive his visa now, given the uncertainty and danger that he is in. He has had to flee his hometown because it has been taken over by military force and he is essentially a refugee in his own country. Your prayers and possibilities are needed for this joyous event to happen.

As we gather each Sunday of Advent, look forward to the ways that your life can be stirred up to participate with bringing about God's ways of hope, love, new life, compassion and justice. Stir Up your power, O Christ, and come!

THE ADVENT WREATH



The Advent Wreath is a Christian tradition that signifies continuous life. The circle of the wreath has no beginning and no end, symbolizing the eternity of God and the everlasting life we find in Christ. The idea of the wreath dates back to the early 1800’s when Pastor Johann Hinrich Wichem who ministered to poor children, used the wreath to help the children mark the weeks until Christmas. In the beginning, the wreath had twenty five candles, one lit each day begin until Christmas. December 1st. In later years the wreath was reduced to four candle that would mark the weeks leading up to Christmas.

This year our wreath utilizes blue candles to mark the weeks until Christmas. The blue color has come to represent the Advent season. Advent is a time of hope and longing for the coming of the Messiah. Beginning with the candle on the front left and then moving clockwise, one candle is lit each week. The candle represent the four themes of Advent, Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. The large white candle in the middle of the wreath represent Christ and is called the “Christ Candle” and is lit on Christmas eve and in many churches burns until Epiphany which marks the visit of the Magi. The body of the wreath is made of evergreens that represent eternal life, because they are always green.

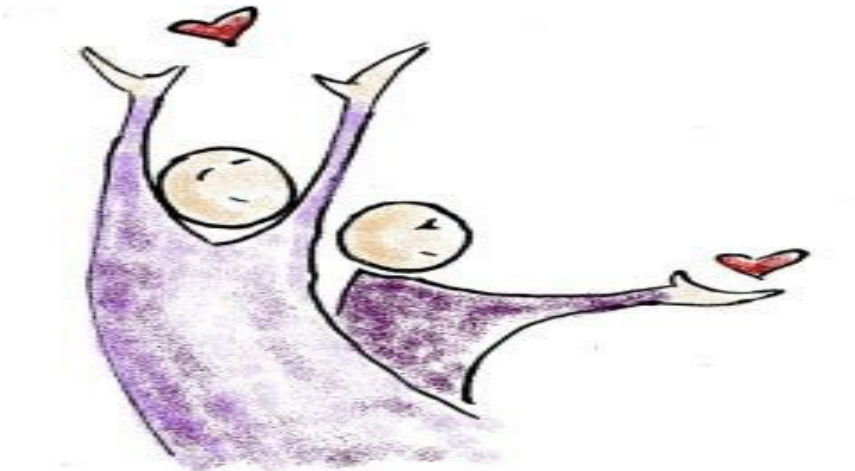
This year as in past years, our family dedicates the Advent Wreath to the memory of my mother Kathryn Lewis Greso who introduced me to using the Advent Wreath to mark the weeks till Christmas when I was a young girl.

We hope as we light the candles on the wreath this year, it will help focus your thoughts to Christ entering the world that long ago Christmas night.

Faithfully, Barbara Johnston

Benevolence Donations (Individual and Church)

2021 through October	
Am. Fdn. Suicide Prevention	\$235
SS Scholarships	\$295
Live Oak Resource Center	\$248
Habitat for Humanity	\$630
Mt. Cross	\$335
World Hunger	\$305
Housing Matters	\$295
CLU/PLTS	\$185
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$334
SS CDC	\$1,652
El Salvador Sister Parish	\$250
Lutheran World Relief	\$65
ELCA Synod	\$750
COPA	\$1,500
Lutheran Immigration	\$0
Total	\$7,079
2021 Benevolence Target (10%)	\$14,360
% of Target	49%



Treasurer Notes ...
 Budget Information · October 2021

	October	October	YTD	YTD	Net
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
Contribution Income	\$10,613	\$11,750	\$111,841	\$119,050	\$-7,209
Facility Use Income *	\$2,215	\$1,217	\$45,608	\$9,467	\$36,141
Investment Income	\$4,385	\$3,750	\$35,678	\$37,500	\$-1,822
Total Income	\$17,213	\$16,717	\$193,127	\$166,017	\$27,110
Expenses	\$16,399	\$18,208	\$170,003	\$189,583	\$-19,580
Net	\$814	\$-1,491	\$23,124	\$-23,566	\$ 46,690

* Includes Child Development Center facility use @ \$300/month (when paid) + Misc. Income.

Contribution income for October was just below budget. Receipts of \$7,500 in Miscellaneous Income as well as the income for the Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness (both in April) were extraordinary income. Expenses were reduced by a Silicon Valley Community Foundation grant for Pastor and Administrator salaries (fully used by the end of April). Please remember your contributions to *your* church.



Thank you to those who have contributed this year!

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

	October	Reserve	Needed to Payoff
Organ	\$150	\$0	279
Piano	\$8	\$120	
Hearing Impaired Equip	\$0	\$395	
Solar Electric Payback	\$199		\$12,452

Church Council Highlights

(meets 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm in the church.)

- Devotions centered around the 11/14/21 Second Reading from Hebrews 10:25, which reminds us to “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more...”
- Program Director for the Association of Faith Communities, Sam Altis-M.Div.Fuller Theo.Sem., was our guest and updated us on the Emergency Shelter, Shower Trailer, and Safe Spaces Parking programs for the homeless in our community. He will be our guest preacher on Sun. Dec. 5th!
- We decided to offer Holy Communion in another way in addition to the presealed elements. We began this practice on 11/14 and now Pastor Jim is masked and offers the bread. The grape juice and wine is offered from our myrtlewood trays in disposable cups.
- Confirmation/Youth Group began Nov.7th, with 6 youth participating! Please pray for this wonderful new beginning.

Reconciling 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.”

Volunteers Needed

The Finance Committee Offering Counters' Group is in need of additional members to assist with this vital weekly endeavor.

The time commitment for a volunteer is approximately 3-4 x per calendar quarter for about 60-90 minutes. The task is completed in pairs of group members. The only skill required is your desire to volunteer. Knowledge of MS Excel is a plus, but not a necessity. Orientation provided.

Thanks to Susan Gross, Bill Anderson, Mark Linder, and Rebecca Wickham for your continued support. Kim Frey and Barbara Rice are leaving the group at this time and we thank them for their time and faithfulness.

Please contact Janet Slay (475-5668) or the church office if you would like to volunteer.



Child Development Center

Welcome to the excitement of December, as I am sure you can only imagine with preschoolers anticipating Christmas. We are sorry we cannot sing for you this year in worship as we continue to take COVID-19 precautions. We have three weeks to make parent gifts and keepsakes.

THANK YOU to Paul Cunningham who has replaced our old gate with a new gate. It is so wonderful and so much appreciated. THANK YOU to Mary Martha Ruth and Rebecca ladies who paid for the gate supplies. We so appreciate your generosity! THANK YOU to our Board president Bill Schraft who is following up on several tasks that have been on our list. Your support means so much to us.

Speaking of gratitude, after three months of searching, we are blessed to have Rosio Adame join our teaching team. She is highly qualified and wanted to work at our school. We are so fortunate she chose us as it is very difficult to find qualified preschool teachers during these times. This completes our teaching team of four. We also welcome Rosio's daughter, Calista who brings another friend to our four-year-old group.

We are proud to have been able to give our teachers increased compensation last month. In this current market with cost of living being so high in Santa Cruz, it was the right thing to do at this time. Certainly, our current teachers deserved this and now we can offer better for any future hires.

After we enjoy the Christmas season, we will be focusing on improving our playground experience beginning with Will, an Eagle Scout who will begin working during our break.

Thank you, Jesus, for providing for SSCDC through good times and bad. Your gifts and blessings are abundant. We are privileged to be on the recovering end of hard times due to COVID-19, and grateful to return to the many activities and connections we get to have with the excellent teachers and students you have brought to our Child Development Center. We are especially grateful for Kathy Allen, our partner in the financial end of all of this. Without her it would have been almost impossible to come out on this better side of blessings realized. Amen!

Merry Christmas! Kathy Berens



Zellie Gebremariam Lapp
November 11

Baby Girl (8lbs. 3oz.) born to Rachel Lapp & Dawit Yerdea. Her middle name is inspired by the Ethiopian tradition, where the grandfather's name is taken. Her first name comes from the word "Zelalam" which is Amharic—the national language of Ethiopia—and it means "forever" or "everlasting".

We continue to pray for Dawit and his family's safety as the Ethiopian conflict escalates, and that his spousal visa would be issued at or near his scheduled date of Dec. 30th.

My family and I would like to THANK ALL OF YOU for your cards of condolence, and kind words after Ron passed away. He has left a huge hole in our hearts, but your kindness and gentleness will help us heal.

Bless you, friends. Sheila Buswell and family



**We all miss each other!
Let us know what's been happening
in your life.
Your notes help keep everyone
hopeful and joyful.
Email it to church:
"office@ststephenslutheran.org"**

The Spiritual Discipline of Rest

By Erin Strybis

Sarah Coomber completely uprooted her life. The strain of the COVID-19 pandemic had convinced her and her husband, both ELCA members, that after nearly two decades in Washington state they needed to move home, near family.

Coomber and her husband knew they needed a breather. That led them to Spent Dandelion retreat center, owned and operated by Anna Madsen, an ELCA pastor. The couple immersed themselves in nature and, discussing topics such as vocation, caring for themselves as parents of a child with special needs, and reclaiming rest.

"We unpacked our hearts," Coomber noted. "Anna reminded us that, no matter what our future looks like, God is in the midst of it, active in every single moment. Acknowledging that in itself [brought] rest to our hearts and minds."

"Anxiety and exhaustion are being lifted up as pressing matters, not just of one's physical well-being but also spiritual well-being," she said. "People are desperate for rest." Madsen noted.

(But) "So many of our society's dominant narratives mitigate against rest," said Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, a professor Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. "We get seduced and sucked into constant activity, and a lot of it is good, worthy, important activity, but it obliterates space for rest. I really think that the capacity to hear the Spirit and to [flourish] as a person are built partly by having rest."

As part of her work, Moe-Lobeda has led student groups focused on rest and self-compassion as spiritual practices. She sees rest as a spiritual discipline because, for most of us, it requires intentionality. "I consider rest a deeply spiritual thing because I think the Holy Spirit within us is partly God's longing for our well-being," she added. "One of the things the Spirit does—if we listen—is guide us toward well-being." An expert in ecojustice and director of the seminary's Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Moe-Lobeda looks to creation for lessons on rest. She points to farmers leaving the fields fallow for a time so that the soil can be renewed.

"The earth itself teaches us to rest," she said. "Trees go into rest in the wintertime and come back much more alive and vital and pulsating with life in the spring after they've rested." And in Genesis, God rests on the seventh day and blesses it as holy.

As people created in God's image, we, too, need rest. Yet rest often evades us.

(Full article Aug. 2021 Living Lutheran)

The Season of Giving

This holiday season, we thank everyone who has supported St. Stephen's this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions and look forward to support from all of our members in the year ahead.



If you need a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to check out our automated giving program. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Janet Slay 475-5668.

Your 2022 Offering envelopes are in the Narthex.

ELCA Good Gifts & God's Global Barnyard

As odd as it seems to give someone the gift of a cow, or a goat, or some chicks, or honey bees, it is this kind of a gift that can change a life, a family and possibly a whole community.

These Gifts are a creative, meaningful way to support the ministries that mean the most to you and your loved ones. The items in the Good Gifts catalog lift up examples of work being done in different projects and programs supported by funds from the ELCA: Fund for Leaders, Global Church Sponsorship, Malaria Campaign, New Congregations, Vision for Mission, World Hunger and Disaster Response. Each of these programs is a long-term partnership-based ministry that focus on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.

Your gifts to God's Global Barnyard will support the sustainable development ministries of the ELCA World Hunger, which include training, education, resources (and much more) to help the community care for animals and create new market opportunities like starting a small business selling eggs, meat or dairy products. Your gifts support this comprehensive approach to animal husbandry. ELCA.org or 1-800-638-3522





Provide Lunches for Volunteers Tuesday, January 25

(4th Tuesday of each month—December CANCELLED)

Thank you to the ten members of St. Stephen's who continue to provide items (sandwiches, fruit, chips, and cookies) for the lunches that we have been providing for many years. The hardworking volunteers, who donate many hours of their time and expertise, appreciate the nourishment very much. I hear their expression of thanks often. Sign-ups for items can be made at church, or by calling the church office. Bring your item to church and someone will deliver the lunch for you. Easy! Presently Habitat for Humanity Monterey Bay is building eleven homes at Rodeo Creek Court (cross street Harper). These are homes for low income families, though they must have an income and provide 500 hours of sweat equity before they can take ownership of their new home.

Habitat "Cars for Homes" Program

Donate your vehicle & help build strength & stability for families in our communities. 100% of net proceeds from the sale of your vehicle will fund our work helping local families.

Monthly Special Benevolence Offering



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

This is a ministry of U.S. Lutherans serving communities living in poverty overseas. It is perhaps best known for the way it responds to the suffering induced by natural disasters. The current crisis is in the path of Hurricane destruction in Central America. But day in and out, LWR works far beyond emergency operations. Their vision is a world in which each person, every community, and all generations live in justice, dignity and peace. Learn more at LWR.org.

November—Santa Cruz al Salvador / Sister Parish = \$135
(as of Nov. 24)



FAITH COMMUNITY SHELTER

As our Faith Community Shelter heads back to a nightly rotation in many congregations, I wanted to touch base with all of you who are a part of that effort.

To start, I wanted to express my gratitude for your generosity in opening your buildings and providing meals. It makes a huge difference in the lives of our shelter members.

Second, I wanted you to see the communities with which you're partnering. At the bottom, you'll find a list of the congregations that are hosting the shelter and those that are providing meals. Your individual efforts are part of a larger interfaith movement to address homelessness in Santa Cruz. You should be proud!

Lastly, I wanted to communicate a few logistical details, namely:

- Our nightly rotation will take a break in February while our friends at St. Phillips in Scotts Valley host us for the month.
- For those of you providing meals, there are updated COVID protocols. We hope to be able to ease those in the future, but state guidelines are pretty strict for shelters currently.

You can also use our FCS Meal Schedule in Google Docs to see the schedule, dietary restrictions, and to add your menu item.

Marianne Ahern, our Assistant Manager, will be your main contact for meals. You can reach her at marianne.ahern@afcsantacruz.org.

If you have questions, thoughts or suggestions, send them my way. I'm looking forward to seeing you around the shelter! With gratitude, Sam

Partnering Faith Communities

Calvary Episcopal Church, Center for Spiritual Living, Chadeish Yameinu, Christ Lutheran, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Community Covenant Church of Scotts Valley (host), Congregational Church of Soquel, Holy Cross Catholic Church, Insight Santa Cruz La Selva Community Church, Our Lady Star of the Sea Church (host), Peace United (host), Quaker Meeting House (host), Redeemer Anglican, Regeneration Church, Resurrection Catholic Church (host), Santa Cruz Bible, Santa Cruz Church of Christ (host), Shrine of St. Joseph (host), St. Andrew's Presbyterian, St. Augustine Catholic, The Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox, St. John's Episcopal (host), St. Phillips Episcopal Church (host), St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Trinity Presbyterian (host), Twin Lakes Church, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist of Aptos, United Methodist of Santa Cruz (host)

Sam Altis (he/him/his), Program Manager
sam.altis@afcsantacruz.org 831-515-6964