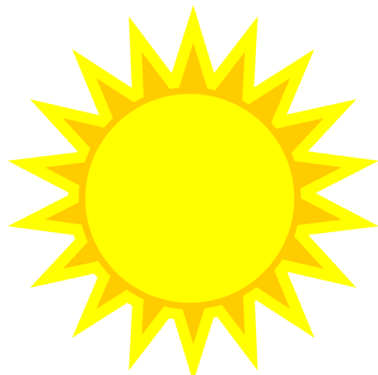


St. Stephen's Lutheran Church



SUN

January 2023

ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

**SUNDAY, JAN. 29 FOLLOWING
WORSHIP AT 10AM**

We gather together to elect leadership to council, elect voting members for Synod Assembly, and approve a budget for 2023 that reflects our mission. Please plan on attending to support your church as we continue to seek God's will for our ministry together.

If it is not possible for you to attend in-person, you can attend via Zoom. Watch for an email link the week before the meeting.



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. — Shelly Barker V.P.— Steven Hendrickson
Secretary - Alyssa Burkhardt
Treasurer— Kent Madsen
David Balogh, Paul Cunningham, and Jay Johnston

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

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

From Pastor Jim



Poetry has a way of expressing the things humans go through in a way that is much more inclusive and creative than we might otherwise understand. This poem does a masterful job of that, especially as we approach our annual meeting. I have loved climbing mountains over the course of the last 30 years and almost was a Geology major in college because they went on the best trips. As usual, lessons learned for being a leader in the church are rife in all creation. The Oxford Dictionary defines “fault lines”: 1) a place where there is a long break in the rock that forms the surface of the earth and where earthquakes are more likely to happen, and 2) an issue that people disagree about and may, as a result, lead to conflict

FAULT LINES by Rene Bohnen

To negotiate the terrain
Of devotions darker
Questions, we set out
In search of knowledge
Buried inside the mountain.
Together we climbed
The treacherous path
Littered with thistle
Bindweed, cheatgrass.
Held out our hands
To pull each other up
To the next outcropping.
And as we tended
Our hunger, our thirst,
Our need for rest

The mountain watched,
Held its breath
And waited for us
To look down and see
That the unwritten history
Inside every living thing
Is a borderless boundary
That can never be breached.



Sierra Pacific Synod

committed to being re-formed

Christmas message from
The Rev. Claire S. Burkat, Interim Bishop

Poor, illiterate, dirty, unkempt, mostly loners...to shepherds guarding their flocks for the night, the angels announced the greatest news ever! This dark outpost, far from the powerful communities and major synagogues, became the center of the world.

Naturally, when an angel appeared with the breaking news of the birth of the Messiah, they were afraid. Why would this Good News be shared first with those tending sheep, rather than with high priests?

Why? Because the news of this night is too big for a temple, or a city, or even a nation to contain. The promise fulfilled that night upends the status quo and makes room for those not welcome elsewhere. After their initial shock, the shepherds live into new identities as they become alert, courageous, and obedient to the direction of the Great Shepherd. Luke tells us they leave their fields and go to worship the newborn child not in the holy temple but in a rough stable, a place for the outsiders whom God led there as well.

The Good News of Jesus' birth invites everyone, even those who aren't usually accepted, to be embraced by an accepting community of faith. It reaches each one of us in our dark and broken places, and makes us whole.

May Christ's light and peace and welcoming grace fill you this Christmas—and overflow so that all the people you come in contact with will know through your witness that the birth of Jesus is Good News for them.

Gracious God, fill our hearts with joy at the news of your presence and light in the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Inspire us to share this Good News with our service and love. Amen.

Church Council Highlights

(meets 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm in the church or/and Zoom.)

1. Devotions were from “Christ In Our Home” for Tuesday, Dec. 13 from the book of Jude vs. 17-25. We were reminded that falling is part of all of our experience—whether as a child learning to walk (as I watch Zellie frequently do!), as older adults when the consequences are usually much greater. The same is true of being a person of the Christian faith and as a church. It just isn’t an easy path. But we also remember especially in this season of Epiphany that the light of Chris is with us—and we only fall as far as God’s arms.
2. **The biggest news is...the sanctuary roof does not leak anymore!**
Thanks to Alyssa Burkhardt for establishing and providing the funds for the repairs. And special thanks to Sherilyn Jager whose persistence and work with Knox Roofing finally resolved a very long-standing problem. It is such a relief to our Custodian John Hopping and Pastor Jim, who were always devising new ways to try and capture the leaks. We are very, very grateful indeed.
3. Some discussion was held about the upcoming potluck that took place on Dec. 18th after worship. We were very grateful to Gary Roberts (everyone really loved the decorations and nutcracker collection), Bill and Margaret Schraft, Don Smawley, Connie Cunningham and Tina Gates for organizing our first potluck in almost 3 years! It was asked that we set some tables up outside in case anyone would rather eat outdoors. A special thanks to Tina Gates who offered Thrivent Funds to help offset some of the costs.
4. The 2023 proposed budget was tabled until the Jan. 10 Council meeting in order to receive all of December giving. This still allows for making available the Council approved proposal two Sundays before the Annual Meeting. Copies will be available in the narthex on Sundays January 15 and 22nd.

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.”



Child Development Center

Before I move on to the news of January, I must reminisce about December. The All-Saints Service was so meaningful to me, as was the one a year before. Sitting there on a rainy day listening and learning about people I knew and did not know well reminded me that I am a small part of a bigger community than I realized. **Together as Lutheran's and Christians we all participate in our own ways to make the world a better place by helping others.** Those remembered offered love, fairness, and friendship to their close people, and to those they did not know but had a need. Many made it a lifelong ministry that changed so many lives for the better. I was not planning on heading this Preschool ministry let alone to teach children. **The Lord called me to this service and ministry, and I followed the way. I am so glad I did much like the people I learned about.** I was touched by how decades ago people were being welcomed to St. Stephen's at a time when some were cast away due to individuals judging them. Really, it is hard to put words to the feelings that stirred in me that day. **I also appreciated getting to share with Pastor Glenn's family how much his/their generosity means to our preschool ministry and their faith in the work we do here.**

My dear friend and colleague Leslie did a magnificent job in bringing the Christmas story to life. She created a traditional yet playful script. She even got me to wear the sign, "Shepherd of the wee ones!" **Leslie is passionate about sharing the word of God with children. I enjoyed our collaboration.** When I first came to St. Stephen's, I wanted to combine the ministries to do this Christmas Pageant to share our preschool with you, and our congregation with them. All our school families enjoyed this event very much. Each time we do this it is so important to me that the children leave with a memory in their hand. They each received an ornament to take home, along with prints of their Christmas photo. **Thank you, Leslie, Pastor Jim, John, and the adults who volunteered to be a part of our Christmas Pageant.** The weekend left my heart full having experienced both events! **Mary, Martha, Ruth, Rebecca so generously dedicated their mitten tree to our students this year. Thank you for thinking of us and creating a closer community.**

I have been grateful to so many of you who donated to Inflation Do-

nation. The savings is so helpful to our budget! I will change the list a bit for January if you would like to continue donating. We also put out flyers for Amazon Smile. **If you do not have a charity that benefits from your purchases at Amazon, please consider our preschool.** It was suggested to me to fill out an Amazon wish list in case people would like to purchase an item for us from there. Some are a one-time purchase; others are supplies ongoing. If you are able, check it out!

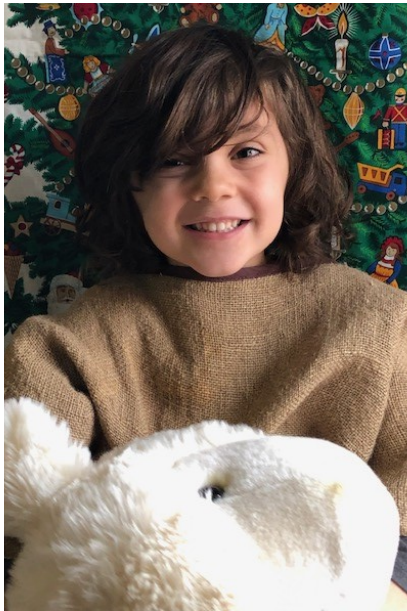
Thank you, Gary, for spearheading the return of our potluck gathering. It was so nice to gather over a meal and visit with friends. Bill and Margaret worked so hard that day setting up and cooking and I appreciate their effort along with other friends who helped. **I especially want to lift up Margaret Schraft as she has been participating in many ministries lately. She is our School Board recorder and has done many recent tasks to benefit our preschool,** plus MMRR with Rebecca Wickham, the Mitten Tree, Bake Sale, and the potluck. Margaret is everywhere these days and very appreciated!

We are excited to welcome three new students beginning January 9th. Edison, Fredrika, and Quinn. We needed a few more students as we are full staffed through this summer. We have two more students beginning in February.

Most of our conferences are finished and we are moving forward with our curriculum that highlights winter. Our group is younger, and we will begin to work more with name writing, and cognitive learning. **The children who were deprived of social emotional connection during the pandemic, are showing us the growth they are having with each other, problem solve, and a better ability to self-regulate themselves.** They needed extra time for this, and we are so happy to observe their positive development.

Happy New Year to all friends in our congregation. This year really ended in a positive way for many as we gathered in fellowship. New Years prayers to our friends who are healing or missing loved ones. The world gets pretty complicated and I am grateful for our little community here filled with support and kindness.

Thanks be to God!
Kathy Berens





Sunday School

The Holy Spirit has been at work.

KNOCK SEEK ASK

People were asked to step up . . .
and they did, with NO hesitation!

Then, life happens. Plans get bungled. It didn't matter that cues were missed, and places were off. In fact, there was a bit of delight in the shuffle. It's not about performance, or entertainment, it's about willingness and attitude.

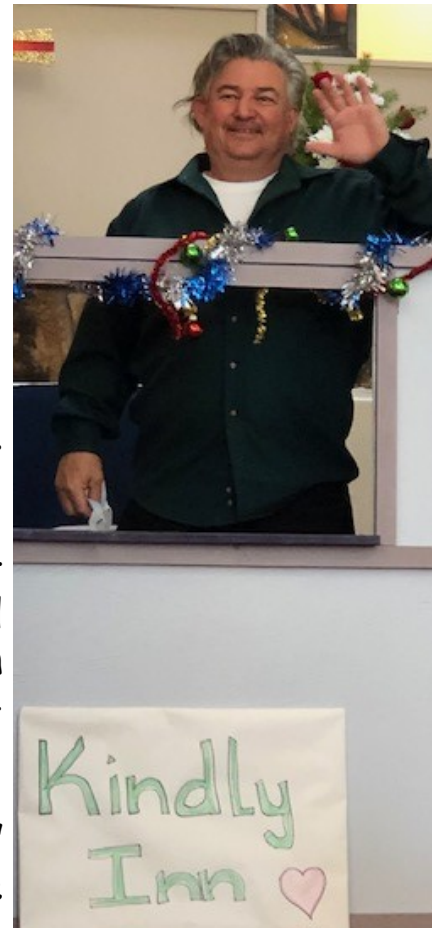
In the past, the children have argued over who "gets" to be Mary. Not this year. They only wanted to be angels and shepherds. At this age, why not let them be what they want to be, so they can be excited (not uncomfortable) as they tell the story.

This opened up an opportunity for multigenerational participation.

Everyone experienced some Christmas joy — a warm memory and perhaps a new perspective on the ancient story.

God bless these participants as they let their light shine. God bless YOU as you embrace Christmas.

Faithfully, Miss Leslie



Provide Lunches for Volunteers Tuesday, January 24

4th Tuesday of each month
(December cancelled)



Please sign up in the narthex or call the church office if you can provide a lunch item: sandwiches, fruit, chips, or cookies. 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. [.habitatmontereybay.com/donate-a-car](http://habitatmontereybay.com/donate-a-car) or (877)277-4344



**Zoom
with Pastor Jim**
**check email on
Weds. for link**

**THURSDAYS 11a -12noon
& 7:30 – 8:30 pm**

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.

In 2023, Rededicate Your Vow of Faith

By Steven Hendrickson

The beginning of a New Year is a wonderful opportunity to rededicate a vow of faith to God in Christ. Expectantly, we long and yearn for a new start and resolve to change and improve from the previous year. What is important is the inner prompting to be intentional from the heart as a faithful response. As Lutherans, we affirm our baptism. Using the Affirmation of Baptism Service in our hymnal, Evangelical Lutheran Worship can be a useful reference as a renewal of your vows.

The beauty of human diversity means that our response is distinctly from our own heart, mind, and soul and truly different from others. The core of our being is animated with God's image and likeness. As we sense this God presence within and all around us in creation, we rededicate ourselves with all the attributes of Christ.

Every year on December 31, is an ideal time to do this. Of course, one can have renewal in faith at any time, but why not now? Scripture, silence, and prayer begin our journey. Regular worship, communion, service, and Christian community constitute our practice and lifestyle.

As in any initiated change, there may be times when we don't use these practices consistently. But our God is very forgiving. We remember our vow and carry on where we left off. Continually being in worship and community help to keep us accountable and supported. Sisters and brothers, a blessed New Year to you, and may all be renewed as a New Creation in Christ. May God's grace and peace be with you.

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 = \$ 48 (as of Dec. 28)

Treasurer Notes ...

Budget Information · November 2022

	November	November	YTD	YTD	Net
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
Contribution Income	\$6,883	\$11,725	\$120,146	\$130,975	\$-10,829
Facility Use Income *	\$938	\$1,216	\$18,667	\$13,382	\$5,285
Investment Income	\$4,385	\$5,000	\$54,575	\$55,000	\$190
Total Income	\$12,206	\$17,941	\$193,389	\$199,357	\$-5,968
Expenses	\$20,231	\$19,042	\$215,847	\$220,736	\$-4,889
Net	\$-8,025	\$-1,101	\$-22,458	\$-21,270	\$-1,079

** Includes Child Development Center facility use @ \$300/month (when paid) + Misc. Inc*
Contribution income for November was considerably below the budget; year-to-date expenses have exceeded income by \$22,458. In early September an additional \$12,000 was withdrawn from investments, making the year-to-date withdrawals \$17,000.

*Please remember your church if you are away this holiday season.
 Thank you to those who have contributed this year!*

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

	November	Reserve	Needed to Payoff
Organ	\$80	\$61	
Piano	\$0	\$120	
Hearing Impaired Equip	\$0	\$395	
Solar Electric Payback	\$176		\$8,955

Benevolence Donations (Individual and Church)

2022 through November		
Am. Fdn. Suicide Prevention	\$400	
SS Scholarships	\$200	
Live Oak Resource Center	\$275	
Habitat for Humanity	\$750	
Mt. Cross	\$285	
World Hunger	\$640	
Housing Matters	\$900	
CLU/PLTS	\$295	
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$393	
SS CDC	\$735	Plus Johnson Trust gift: \$25,000
El Salvador Sister Parish	\$370	Plus Johnson Trust gift: \$10,000
Lutheran World Relief	\$50	Plus Johnson Trust gift: \$5,000
ELCA Synod	\$750	
COPA	\$1,500	Plus Johnson Trust gift: \$4,165
Lutheran Immigration	\$0	
Grey Bears	\$0	Plus Johnson Trust gift: \$5,000
Total	\$7,543	
2021 Benevolence Target (10%)	\$14,360	
% of Target	53%	Johnson Trust gifts: \$49,165





Sister Parish News

2023 Prayer Children - The timing for our prayer child commitments has changed. As we did last year, we will be contacting you early in 2023 once the scholarship committee in Guillermo Ungo has identified scholarship recipients for the year. Also like last year, we will be asking that you open up your hearts and make an additional \$50 contribution for a family gift. It only takes a little from us to make a big difference in the lives of the children we have come to know and love in Ungo.

2022 Delegation -

From Steve Barrett, one of the delegation members this year:

"Day 2 our Santa Cruz Al Salvador delegation visited the community of El Pilar, near Zaragoza, where we have been working for about 7 years helping with basic infrastructure including some help with wells and funding or constructing 93 composting latrines to date. My job was to help with fluoride teeth painting coordinated by Dr. George Bunch and craft projects led by Corinne Barrett (photo above). Our motto is 'Building Relationships for Better Lives' and our mission was lived out as we brought smiles to the faces of both adults and children, and joy to our hearts in this community where smiles were not easily found a few years ago. Community leaders Deny and Antonio have done a great job in coordinating the latrine project and also helping the community to learn to work well together. As we shared our reflections of the day there were few thorns and a garden full of roses."

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Santa Cruz al Salvador, thank you, members of St. Stephen's, for your contributions. We cannot do our work without our donors. *Your gifts make a difference!*

—Kent Madsen

Birthdays & Anniversaries

1-1 Nathan Lapp

1-1 Gina Mendoza

1-9 Esdras Garden

1-10 Colby Hanson

1-11 Mitch Crews

1-12 Linda Hix

1-13 Jennifer Robe

1-14 Sofia Bartee

1-16 Ellie Russell

1-17 Emily Valencia

1-18 Patty Travers

1-21 Chris Turzo

1-23 Diane Hintz

1-25 Neil Crews

1-26 Iris Colclough

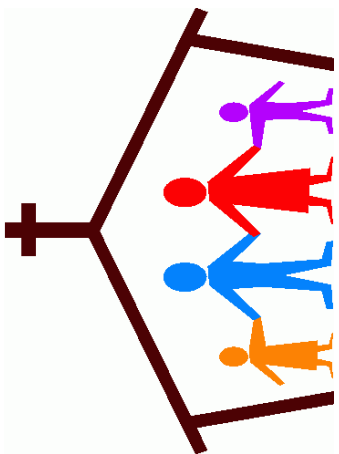
1-26 John Wickham



SHORT TERM: Family of Sandie Sanders, Craig Dahl, Family of Kurt Bell, Genell Csik, Mike Homa, Mateo, Family of Mark Cronquist, Erica Curry, Rosio, Barbara Stiles, Alessandra, John W., Family of Connor Kowalski, Shiela P., Mary Smith, Tina G., Paul Cunningham, Barbara Allen, Beth Stiles, Anita & Howard, Sydnei Wilbywold, Paul Paustian, Will, Deborah Henry, Carla, Ellie, Adrian, Cameron, Gaye Cornell, Dorothy, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Kirsten Skiles, Nancy, Marisa

& Isaac, Mateo & Lina, Don, Atlas, Anthony, Steve, Margot Wilson, Rose, Will, Sam, Aaron Johnson, Sal, Katarina, Taiyo, Mateo, Stephanie Jager, Parents, Healthcare workers & teachers.

LONG TERM: Kyle Lapp, Shelby Volpi, Ashley, Dom Linda Johnson, Bailey Ingalls, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, Michelle, Josh, CJ, Bobbie Erickson, Lupe, Joyce, Susan Anderson, Jan Wagner, Richard C., Brouse Family, Janet Baker, Sandy Godvine, Janelle Yung, Karin, Will, Chris, Pearl Runquist, Volpi & Robe Family, Cabel, Miller, Noah, Esdras, Dawit & conflict in Ethiopia, Immigrant families, The Homeless, The People of Ukraine, Our Nation's leaders, Mt. Cross, St. Stephen's Child Development Ctr, Pastor Jim & Our Church Family, men and women of Armed Forces, and the Youth of today.



ST. STEPHEN'S WORSHIP SERVICE

Ready for your participation each Sunday at 10am.

In-person, Live Streamed on our website, or as a recording.

Go to ***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 28 2022**

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

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

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