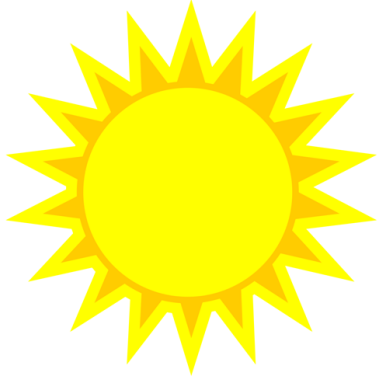


# *St. Stephen's Lutheran Church*



# *SUN*

## *January 2024*

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

### Sunday, January 28th

### **Immediately after 10' a.m. Worship**

**Refreshments will be provided**

We gather together to begin a Long-Range Planning Task Force, elect leadership to council, elect 2 voting members for Synod Assembly, and approve a budget for 2024 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  
Jay Johnston, Beth Stiles, and Iva Tracey

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

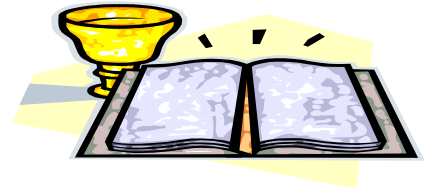
**MISSION STATEMENT**

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*



It has been a wonderful Holiday/Advent/Christmas season this year! It finally feels like we have adjusted to the consequences of the pandemic and we are moving past its effects and into the new way that we will be church in the next 5 years or so.

As we noted in our series of Holy Conversations in November, it is a mixed feeling of sadness over how we have declined in number and bid farewell to so many both through moving out of the area and through moving on to our heavenly home...and the feeling of anticipation of what God is calling us to be.

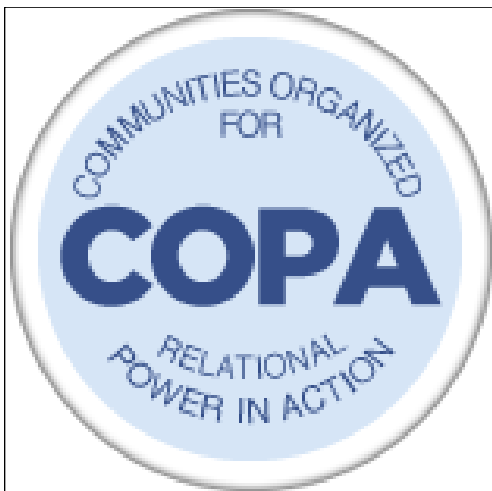
I am looking forward to helping lead us into fulfilling our mission both in ways that we are familiar with and in ways that we are just beginning to wonder about. I think it is necessary to maintain a balance of both things, especially as I have heard from so many who have walked in the path of church decline before us. I also think that our new Bishop Jeff Johnson will be the right leader in our Synod for us and so many others like us in our region. Creativity and honesty will be the hopeful ways we will move forward.

To that end, our Church Council will be forming a new Long Range (next 5yrs) Planning Task Force as we begin to dream with God's Holy Spirit anew, what our ministry may look like. Some of you have been approached to participate in this exciting endeavor as a part of the Task Force as a result of your engagement in the Holy Conversations. Some of you may feel like God is calling you to offer your gifts on it as well. So please contact me or our President Shelly Barker if interested.

It is exciting to me because the last time we formed such a Task Force, it resulted in 2 significant new mission-focused actions—St. Stephen's Senior Housing and our Child Development Center. So we have good experiences to draw from and look forward to bringing to life.!



I was sitting in Chapel today and one of our boys came over to sit next to me. He slowly scooted closer until my arm was around him. While he enjoyed Chapel, he looked up at me and shared some of the ideas in his head about Christmas and the different thoughts he was having. The closeness and warmth I felt is the most special it can get. He trusts me and knows that I care about him enough to engage in our connection. Later, at rest time I sat with a few children as they settled in. The girl I was sitting next to reached out and gently held my hand as she drifted off. Her hand was petite and so trusting. I have been able to experience so many special moments with our children over the years, and the “rock star” shout out down the hall or in the classroom, “MISS KATHY!” I look forward to next year and making more connections that forge love and trust. Sometimes educators get tired, but I cannot imagine doing anything else that would warm my heart like this does. Happy New Year! ~ Kathy Berens



## **COPA Accountability Assembly Green Acres Elementary School January 27, 3-5 p.m.**

This will be an important assembly as three of the five seats on the Board of Supervisors are up for election. In addition four of the seven Santa Cruz City Council seats are up for election. We anticipate all the candidates for these seats will join us at the Assembly. COPA's two major issue areas this year are housing, especially rental housing and behavioral health. COPA members will be sharing their stories as we seek to learn which candidates will work with us. We do not endorse candidates. We focus on issues that impact members of our institutions. - Mark Linder

# **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.”**

## **Church Council Highlights**

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

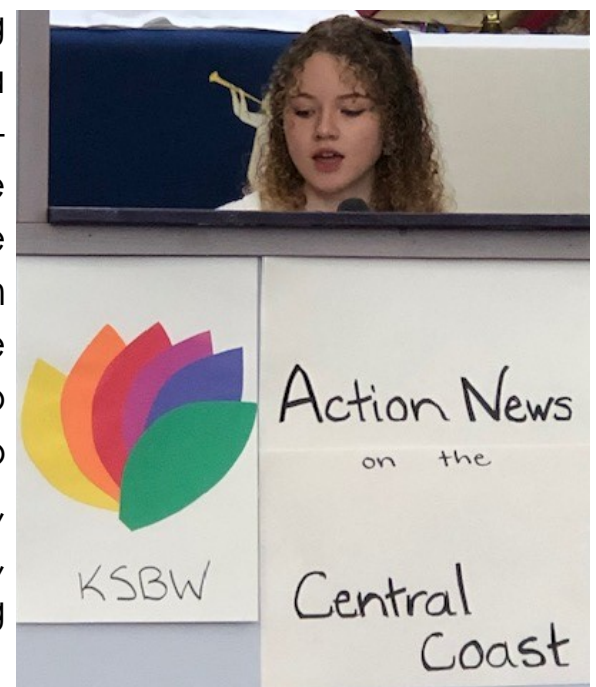
1. Shelly Barker, Steven Hendrickson, Alyssa Burkhardt, Kent Madsen, Beth Stiles, Iva Tracey and Pastor Jim were present. Jay Johnston was visiting family out of town.
2. Pastor Jim reported on attending the Installation Worship Service at Christ Lutheran, Aptos for newly ordained pastor Rev. Jonas Eliason. He noted an article in the Aptos Times that welcomed Pastor Jonas and family.
3. Our new Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop Jeff Johnson (Cal Lutheran Univ. classmate of Pastor Jim’s) was installed on Sat. Dec. 9th at St. Matthew’s, Walnut Creek. Pastor Jim was unable to attend, but recommended the YouTube recording—especially the sermon— as it was widely received as one of the best some pastors had ever heard.
4. Conversation continued about the 2024 Congregational Budget. It was generally felt that we will need to draw additionally from our reserves for the coming year in order to maintain our current level of service. Because we did not withdraw from our appx. \$1.5 million in reserves for the first 2 years of our 5 year agreement (withdraw up to \$25,000 per year), that we will likely propose withdrawing more than that in this last year of the agreement in order to meet our budget. This will enable staff Cost Of Living Adjustment raises for the first time in 5 years, as well as bookkeeping services that we will need to begin for the first time in 6 years, since Kent Madsen will be leaving Council after serving his two 3-year terms.
5. Council will provide the proposed 2024 Budget 2 weeks in advance of our Annual Meeting. Printed copies will be in the back of the church beginning Sunday, January 14.





My heart is warm as I remember our Christmas Pageant and what it means to so many to do this traditional event, yet with a modern spin. Separate we aren't that big, but together, we can bring great joy. Combining church with preschool, Pastor, Administration, Custodian, and Preschool Director to implement. Young families anticipating what they will see their child do on

stage for the first time. Warming the hearts of elder friends (Including myself) with their treasured memories of a generation or two before them, and seeing many things remain the same. I marveled at the ownership of our new confirmands who took on carrying this story to all generations. Everyone had a light to share, and it was captured in a snapshot to forever hang on each child's tree. We do not need epic productions to stir up the memories of yesteryear, we got to see them here in our Chapel. Each year is a bit more special just because we took the time to do this, and it mattered to so many! Thank you to all, but I especially thank John for joining in, Pastor Jim for accompanying the children, and Leslie for being the vision and making







sure the story was told. How many of you remembered the Christmas Pageant your child was first in and relived it in your mind. My little lamb had a bloody nose right before stage time 32 years ago at a small Lutheran church in Poway, CA She still returned to the show, and I have never forgotten. It doesn't matter what the children do, just being there is the gift that yields smiles. Why fellowship? This is why, priceless, timeless memories, together in Christ.

~ Warmly, Kathy Berens



What a privilege to have our recent confirmands lead us in telling THE STORY. Not to mention hamming it up with the star chant, and posing inside a TV set.

What a pleasure to have John join us again in a key role. All the kids know him, and placing him in that role was magical.

How bout the thought of your "expecting" loved one being turned away from every hospital in town? That truth alone causes a pause. A powerful Mindful Christianity quote:

**"We are all innkeepers  
having to decide  
if there is room for Jesus".**

I bet you have never seen Joseph as a construction worker? Nor have you seen that same Joseph holding baby Jesus. How about the young Wise Souls bringing their favorite toys as gifts so that baby Jesus could have some fun.

May we carry that Spirit & be like the children excitedly moo-ing and singing their hearts out!

~ Faithfully, Miss Leslie





# Music at St. Stephen's

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to everyone!

Help us grow in, 2024. Join the music team. We are building an ensemble of musicians, interpretative dancers, and cantors who wish a musical format to express themselves for our worship this year. Think about being part of this new family of music. We are already working on Lent, Good Friday and a HUGE EASTER CELEBRATION!

We Need bell choir ringers—and All That Jazz! Be a leader / player.

Blessings to you and your family this year and invite a friend to our community in Christ, break bread, and celebrate the Good News together . . . that CHRIST HAS RISEN !

Sign up for Altar Flowers

Dedicate to loved ones

New Florist - Leah "All Purpose Flowers"







## MaryMartha / Ruth Rebecca Circle

Thursday, January 11th  
10:30 Fireside Room

All women are welcome.  
Contact Tina Gates 760)992-4804 or  
[gateschristina84@gmail.com](mailto:gateschristina84@gmail.com)

~ **Angel gift tree** ~ A huge THANK YOU to all of our St. Stephen's Family and Friends!! With your heartfelt generosity, we donated over 75 toys, games, balls, books and art supplies to the Volunteer Center's Adopt a Family 2023 program. As our deadline was approaching, not all our angels had been taken from the tree. Anonymously, we were gifted with an entire box of action figures and games! *You know who you are and we are so very grateful.* On December 11<sup>th</sup> with the help of Tina's granddaughter, Desiree Gustofson, the truckload of gifts were delivered to the Sears building for sorting and distribution to children in need in time for Christmas.

All these families are struggling with special circumstances such as: surviving the recent flooding in Pajaro, homelessness, parents or children with disabilities, victims of violent crime, families facing serious health challenges or other hardships. *You are helping make a difference!*



## Women's Café Group

Wednesday, Jan. 17 @ 6:00 pm  
Dinner, Devotions & Fellowship 476-4700

## 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 = \$ 75** (as of Dec. 24)



## Zoom with Pastor Jim

check email on  
Weds. for link

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

*For the next several months, we will be using the biblical resource: **"Manna and Mercy"** A brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe by Rev. Daniel Erlander (the same author as "The Tales of the Pointless People", which we used in Lent).*

*Anyone can join in at any point. Each chapter stands alone, but is also connected as part of the whole story of the Bible. Copies are available at church for \$10 each. Or it can be mailed to you.*

## Provide Lunches for Volunteers January 23

4th Tuesday of each month—No December

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.

Habitat 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. [www.habitatmontereybay.org](http://www.habitatmontereybay.org)

**Habitat “Cars for Homes” Program.** Donate your vehicle and 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://www.habitatmontereybay.com/donate-a-car) (877)277-4344



### THANK YOU HABITAT LUNCH PROVIDERS!

*You know who you are, and the hard working Habitat for Humanity volunteers appreciate you. I hear their appreciation each month when the lunches are delivered. You have faithfully provided sandwiches, chips, fruit, cookies and drink throughout another year. Thanks to all of you. DID YOU KNOW? Presently, St. Stephen's members are providing lunches to the faithful Habitat for Humanity volunteers at the Rodeo Creek Court site on the fourth Tuesday of each month, where 11 homes are being built for well deserving families in our county. Eight homes have been completed where the families have already created a warm community. Three more homes are under construction and expect to be completed in 2024. St. Stephen's has provided lunches for at least 15 years at various sites throughout the county. You, too, can help provide lunches to this well deserving group of workers by signing up on the sheet at the back of the church. It's easy. Thank you - Sheila Buswell Habitat lunch coordinator*

## Treasurer Notes ...

### Budget Information · November 2023

	November		YTD		
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Net
<b>Contribution Income</b>	\$ 7,630	\$ 11,250	\$116,387	\$126,800	\$ -10,413
<b>Facility Use Income *</b>	1,421	1,633	17,069	17,967	-898
<b>Investment Income</b>	4,386	5,000	54,914	55,000	-96
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 13,437	\$ 17,883	\$188,369	\$199,767	\$ -11,398
<b>Expenses</b>	\$ 17,301	\$ 20,098	\$222,152	\$224,278	\$670
<b>Net</b>	\$ -3,864	\$-2,215	\$ -33,783	\$ -24,511	\$-9,272

\* Includes Child Development Center facility use @ \$300/month (when paid) + Misc. Income. Contribution income for November was well below budget, and there is a \$33,783 year-to-date deficit. \$22,000 was withdrawn from investments this summer to meet expenses, and an additional \$3,000 was withdrawn in November.

*Please remember your church if you are traveling. Thank you for this year's contributions!*

### Special funds for the Musical Instruments (Organ & Piano), Music Ministry, Hearing Impaired and Solar Electricity

	November	Reserve	Needed to Payoff
<b>Musical Instruments</b>	\$ 58	\$ 300	
<b>Music Ministry</b>	\$10	\$1,286	
<b>Hearing Impaired Equip</b>	\$0	\$395	
<b>Solar Electric Payback</b>	\$193		\$5,479

- Kent Madsen



## Benevolence Donations (Individual and Church, including proceeds from Easter Lilies & Poinsettias)

2023 through November			
Community Bridges	\$230	Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$282
Assoc. of Faith Communities	\$1,390	SS CDC	\$2,735
SS Scholarships	\$395	El Salvador Sister Parish	\$420
Habitat for Humanity	\$380	Lutheran World Relief	\$30
Mt. Cross	\$477	ELCA Synod	\$772
Am. Fdn. Suicide Prevention	\$330	COPA	\$1,500
World Hunger	\$265	Lutheran Immigration	\$0
CLU/PLTS	\$155	Grey Bears	\$0
Total		\$ 9,361	
2021 Benevolence Target (10%)		\$14,105	
% of Target		66%	

## St. Stephen's is Now Accepting Zelle®

A new giving option has been added! You may now contribute to St. Stephen's using Zelle®.

Zelle® is a bank-to-bank money transfer method. To use it, you must first sign up on your bank's website or app. Then, follow these steps:

1. Log into your bank's website or app.
  2. Select the "Transfers" or "Move Money" functions.
- The first time, you will need to select "New Contact". Find St. Stephen's with the e-mail address "[giving@ststephenslutheran.org](mailto:giving@ststephenslutheran.org)".
1. Enter the amount you wish to send.
  2. Please add a Reason or Purpose for your donation.
  3. Review and click or touch Send.



## Sister Parish News

**Happy 2024!** - January marks the beginning of the school year in El Salvador. We will be renewing prayer child commitments in early 2024 for the school year. We will also be looking for sponsors for students new to our scholarship program.

**2023 Delegation** - The delegation members were pleased to be able to attend the graduation ceremony at the Guillermo Ungo school. Pictured below is Jose Armando, prayer child of Steve and Corinne Barrett.

During the meeting with the school Director, Maria Paz, the delegation heard some incredible news: the Ministry of Education will completely rebuild the school buildings in 2024. The school officials are scrambling to figure out how to hold school while the campus is a construction zone. We'll update you as we hear more and learn how we might help.

*Visiting El Salvador is a life-changing experience!*

**Prayer Children for 2024** - A reminder that 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  
SCaS Board of Directors



# 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

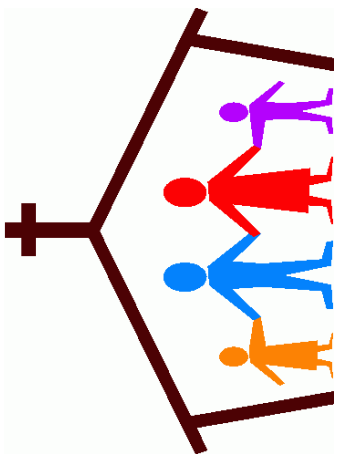
1-26 John Wickham



**SHORT TERM:** Anne Rice, Cheryl Davis, Rosie, Sue, Lindsay Rosenberg, Middle East Peace, Maria, Cody Turner, Jan, Jacque N. Diane Strong, Family of Jean Patterson, San Diego families of Nancy & Sam, Renee, Brandon, Tom Dawson, Rena Brown, James, Tina, Lurline Moore, Keith, Taiyo, Marissa, Isaac, James

Boudreau, Alvarado family, Dustin, Eric Utto-Galarneau, Father Jack Davis, Corcoran family, Keith, Mike Homer, Sam, Atlas, Tony, Sandi Csik, Janica Paustian, Amy Wimmer, Gray, Hailey, Jesse, Joyce, James, John, Elida, Jeannie, Anetta, Jane, Barbara Allen, Kathy, Joel Hurttgam, Sandy, Levi & Alexandria, Gary Toops, Donna Kemper, Lisa & Beau, Craig Dahl, Genell Csik, Paul Cunningham, Paul Paustian, Dawit & Family (Ethiopia), Gaye Cornell, Dorothy, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Nancy, Mateo & Lina, Don, Atlas, Anthony, Steve, Margot Wilson, Rose, Will, Aaron Johnson, Sal, Katarina, Stephanie Jager, Parents, Healthcare workers & teachers.

**LONG TERM:** Biergiel—Colclough family, April McCalmont, Marty Nehring, Miller Mouw, Kyle Lapp, Shelby Volpi, Ashley, Frank, Joe, Dom, Linda Johnson, Bailey Ingalls, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, Bobbie Erickson, Joyce, Susan Anderson, Jan Wagner, Richard C., Brouse Family, Janet Baker, Sandy Godvine, Janelle Yung, Karin, Will, Chris, Pearl Runquist, Volpi & Robe Family, Cabel, Noah, Esdras, Immigrant families, The Homeless, People of Ukraine, Our Nation's leaders, Mt. Cross, St. Stephen's Child Development Ctr, Pastor Jim & Our Church Family, men & 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, 2023**

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

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

Non-Profit Org.  
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Santa Cruz, CA 95060-9998