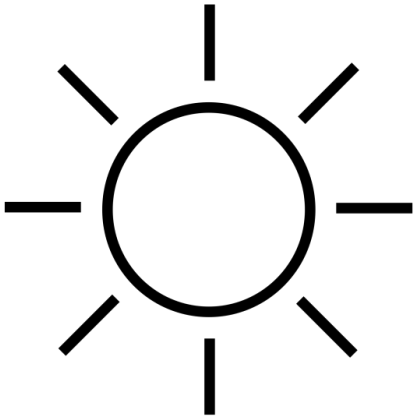


St. Stephen's Lutheran Church



Sun
March 2025

Lent begins



Time for us to examine our lives
And
Strengthen our faith

Worship March 5 at 7:00 pm

A recorded service will be offered on our website so you can observe this solemn and reflective beginning of preparation for the Joy of Easter.

Wednesdays in Lent —

March 12, 19 & 26 April 2 & 9

Soup at 6:00 pm

&

Worship 7:00 pm



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. — Steven Hendrickson V.P.— Beth Stiles
Secretary - Sofia Bartee
Treasurer— Mark Linder
Robert Bartee, Margaret Schraft, 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



IN MEMORIAM

**George Webber—90 years old
Entered Eternal Rest February 20, 2025**

We have included George in our prayers from some months now that “God’s love would surround him in his last days”. I had been visiting him weekly since he became unable to attend church as cancer grew within him. It is a very hard, yet sometimes incredibly inspirational experience to walk with a child of God as they face their last days on earth.

Most weeks George would begin our conversation saying, “Pastor, this is really not living”. He had been a very active outdoorsman his whole life and led a very full life with his family and friends, and more recently us – his church family. He and his wife Judy became part of this church after spending most of their life as members of another church. As they entered their 80’s they decided to return to George’s Lutheran roots, and we joyfully received them. When Judy died suddenly several years ago (“I never expected her to go first” he would often say), we were here for George as he deeply grieved. He treasured his time here and rarely missed a Sunday when he was in town.

Still, it never got easier to visit George and witness his slow decline. You may have picked up in my prayers at church that he and I were also praying that God would take him sooner. But God didn’t. And so we kept telling stories to each other and ending our visits with Holy Communion – sometimes shared with his hospice caregivers. I will never forget his courage of awaking each day to the reality that his physical state would only get worse, yet mustering up the energy to thank me for visiting and letting me know how much it helped, and how he looked forward to seeing me next time.

What do we have at the end? I sometimes would remind George that despite the reality of his situation, that we are always able to love others, and receive the love of God. And we were deeply reminded of how God always loves us especially when one day George gave me a bulletin he had found in his car from **exactly 3 years ago to the week!** We had just read the exact same readings the last Sunday—when Jesus gladdened the wedding at Cana.

So we took some joy and comfort in a difficult time and appreciated how the Holy Spirit touched us in that moment. Blessed be the memory of this child of God, and may light perpetual shine upon him.



Music at St. Stephen's

I just started re-reading the book "Turn Your Church Inside-Out" by Walt Kallested. What an exciting read, on celebrating others, praying, and worshipping in a church for others. I thought, why not turn music outside-in for others, that's it! Celebrating others, by extending the Invitation, to our un-known fellow Christians, and the secular fields as well. Kallestad reminded me that we must include the excluded. He said And include the joy of music, for ourselves and

others. We can turn our church as a platform for music, into something truly great. It's going to take some work, and getting ourselves turned-on to the idea and hopefully embrace a new ministry.

If this might be something that you possibly would enjoy—join the steering committee. No evening meeting. No week-end meetings. No problem! Yes after church 20 minutes. Quick meeting. Yes to having fun. Let me know.

Join the Easter Choir, All That Brass back in full swing. Servant leadership is easy, and fulfilling, give it a try.

Yours In Christ & Mission ~ Gary

Bible Study

Resumes

April 23

Long Range Task Force—Small Group Meetings

Sundays March 23 & 30 at 11:30am –12:30pm

Thursdays March 27 & April 3 at 7:00-8pm

In the Fireside Room (watch email for Zoom options)

Please plan to gather for these important conversations as we begin to plan for our ministry in the next 5 years. Here are some of the possibilities/topics that have surfaced over the past year:

1. Move to part-time pastor in August 2030 (Pastor Jim retires). Significant budget reduction in salary and healthcare allows us to continue a diminished existing ministry, possibly leading toward Holy Closure.
2. Begin process of converting existing land/facility into a Community Legacy (low-income housing, Sober Living Environment etc..). This may lead to increase in Reserve Fund for future ministry due to use of land similar to St. Stephen's Senior Housing. New development would include possible new smaller worship space or convert existing space (Fireside Room) into new worship space.
3. Begin new Spanish-speaking ministry with ELCA funding and leadership with Pastor Eduardo Trejo, El Buen Pastor, Salinas.
4. Merge with neighboring small congregation and bring Reserve Fund/Assets to bolster mission and witness in stronger congregation.
5. Combination/variation of all of the above.

Our guiding questions for the small group meeting conversations will be:

1. How do you feel about being a part of St. Stephen's– How would you describe the spirit of our community?
2. What are your reactions to the possibilities and ideas for our ministry for the next 5 years—What other possibilities do you envision?



We have welcomed three new students to Miss Brenda's classroom. Most inquiries are age 2-3. Currently her classroom at 6 students is cooperative with each other, which is a blessing. That is not always the case. As we know, COVID left its mark on education and the children who were disrupted. Recently, I am observing an overall improvement in young children and their ability to explore the classroom setting, feeling more trusting and curious. There will always be some young friends that do really miss their mommy. All we can do is support them until they adjust to this new world away from Mommy.

In our older class we brought some books to life. I hope you have had a chance to see our Snowballs display in the hallway. Looking for the collage materials is as fun as squirting their own glue. We also acted out Jan Brett's The Mitten which this class has liked more than most.

We were very blessed to have Veronika Harmon find us, looking for a Teaching Assistant job. She is so kind and calm with the children. She has brought her tanks from home sharing Cockroaches (Not my favorite tee hee), Hermit Crabs and Newts. I am so delighted that she is sharing this science with our classroom. For decades I shared pets. Remember chicken and duck hatching? I no longer can handle all the pet care and am pet free, so I really appreciate her filling in that "sense of wonder" experience for the children. Her son is 8 and into all these cool things! Welcome Veronika, we are so blessed that you found us.

This month we will celebrate Dr. Seuss and St. Patrick's Day. It is nice to have some space before Easter. Green Eggs and Ham will be tasted, along with green artwork in general.

Thomas May from our Scout Troop will be completing his Eagle Scout project on our playground! How fortunate are we to have him, as well as so many before him to share their time and talents with us. We will be improving the bike track and adding woodchips to the playground. He will also get our planter beds ready in the garden.

Warmly, Kathy Berens



During Lent, we walk with Jesus through the desert. The path to Easter demands that we renew our hearts. Lent comes to reawaken us, to shake us from our lethargy. It can be a new beginning.

**LENT is about
BECOMING,
DOING, and
CHANGING,**

**Whatever it is that is blocking
the fullness of life in us right now.**

Easter at St. Stephen's is always glorious. Everyone has a special time, those we see weekly and those we don't see often. The celebration extends to many families who are visiting for the first time. They leave with full hearts and bellies. This celebrating takes a few extra hands (and feet). How can you help?

Who can help with children's activities?

Who can help with the Easter Breakfast?

Who can stay and clean up?



“Everything in Between Meeting God in the Midst of Extremes”

New Lenten Worship by Rev. Sarah Speed
Founding Creative partner of *A Sanctified Art LLC* | sanctifiedart.org.

A Sanctified Art was founded with dreams to fill the Church with more art, inspiration, creativity, and God-breathed mystery. Our mission is to provide spiritual nourishment for church leaders and the communities they serve. We're committed to expanding imagination around the divine image and providing resources with inclusive and affirming theology.

Our theme, “Everything In Between,” invites us to navigate the polarities in our lives with more faith, intention, and openness to be transformed. You will see that each weekly sub-theme explores two supposed binaries, like “faith & works” or “rest & growth,” or “grief & hope.” We often consider these ideas to be opposing. However, as we explore these concepts within the scriptures, we find nuance and complexity. We find that these dichotomies are false. We might begin to see a full spectrum instead of black and white. We might find that God is present in between.

And so, this season, we invite you to look beyond black and white binaries and easy answers. We encourage you to notice the dichotomies that define our lives, but also imagine where God might be meeting us beyond the categories we create. This Lent, we're trusting that God shows up in shades of gray, rainbow hues, and everywhere in between.

Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities.

Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world. Writing is her most beloved spiritual practice. You can find her daily poems on Instagram and Facebook: [@writingthegood](https://www.instagram.com/writingthegood) | writingthegood.com

Lent Fasting

by Barbara Hathaway, CLM

Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
Fast from pessimism be filled with love.
Fast from worries and have trust in God.
Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
Fast from pressure and be prayerful.
Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
Fast from words and be silent as you listen.

What Can I do To Solve a Problem?

Someone offends you: Tell someone about it and the listener thinks less of the offender. They join in negativity. You have succeeded in causing others to sin, creating division in relationships, making yourself more upset by re-hashing details over, directly, knowingly, willfully, disobeying God's word, by reacting according to the flesh instead of submitting to the Spirit.

Or to directly to God in prayer: God listens and gives better perspective. You feel peace and need to vent subsides. You honor God by valuing unity over temporary pleasure of gossiping and gaining sympathy from others.

Shifting response and support responses: Shift response on yourself by beginning sentence with "I not you". Listen more and talk less, encourage others to continue.

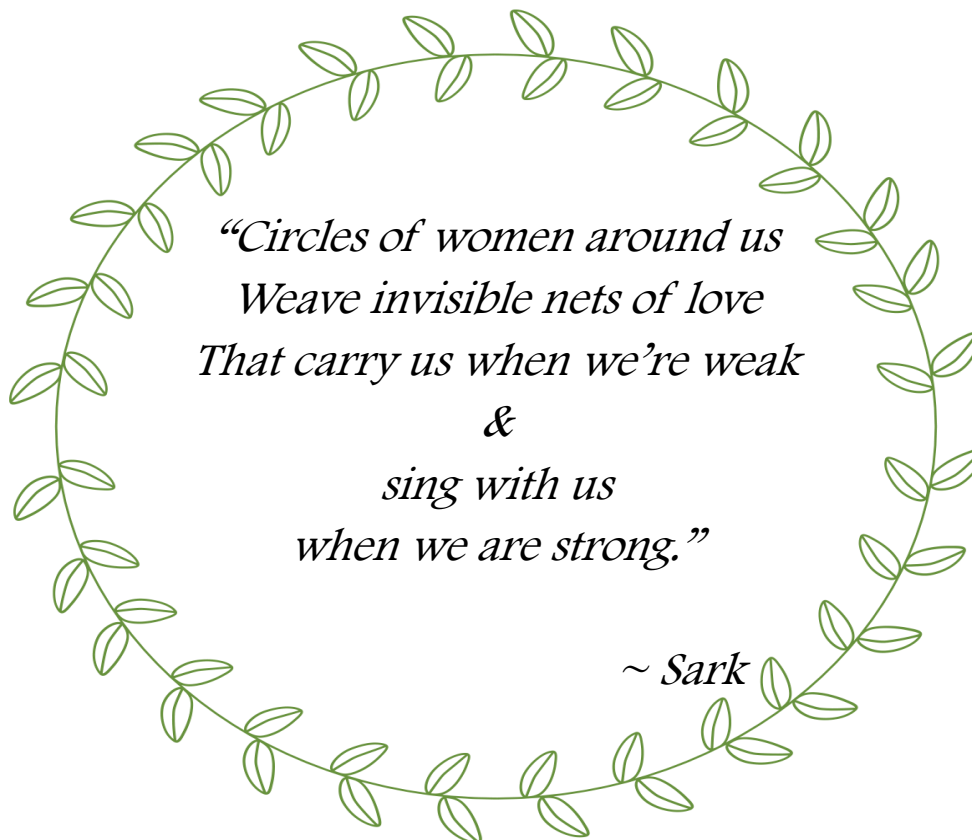


Mary Martha / Ruth Rebecca Circle

Next meeting: March 13 at 10:30

We will be preparing St. Patrick's Day gifts for the preschool children. We will be planning for our April meeting that this year we are holding on **Maundy Thursday, April 17**. The Circle is hosting a soup luncheon for people attending the daytime Maundy Thursday worship service. We encourage all women of St. Stephen's to come join in this ministry of hospitality.

Tina gateschristina84@gmail.com
or Cheryl Curry cherylcjf@cs.com



Women's CAFÉ group resumes May 1

Easter Pancake Breakfast 9:00 am



(Free will offering)

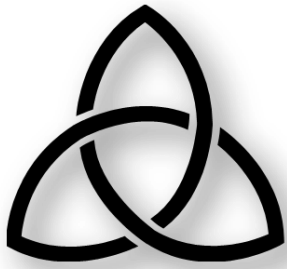
Judi & Robert, Our fearless leaders have returned.
Please sign up to help
(set up Saturday, serve & clean up Sunday)



Help decorate our sanctuary & honor loved ones

- ~ Make \$15 checks payable to St. Stephen's, Memo line "Lily"
- ~ List your dedication on the sign up sheet
- ~ Take home your flower after the Easter service.

The Easter lily has traditional and spiritual meaning. Mentioned in the Bible, the white lily symbolizes purity, rebirth, new beginnings and hope and is most often associated with the resurrection of Jesus. In Pagan traditions, the Easter lily is associated with motherhood and is gifted to mothers as a symbol of gratitude.



Trinity Tuesday

(Pub Theology / Discussion)

March 4 at 6:30pm

(First Tuesday of the month)

Place: Discretion Brewing 41st Ave.

1 HOUR

1 QUESTION

1 DRINK

(3-in-1)

Have you been contemplating coming — - - your curiosity piqued by the, "one question, one drink, and one hour" description?

I decided to give it a shot, and I'm glad I did! I found the informal, non-judgmental gathering to be an intellectually stimulating, fun, social circle. I enjoyed the collaborative pondering of questions (some prepared and some spontaneous) addressed in an open forum, conversational style. The experience was akin to attending a philosophical salon except the topics were theological in nature, reference, and response.

Essentially, Trinity Tuesday is a safe and welcoming space for collaborative pondering and casual conversation around important topics with theological perspectives.

No materials necessary. Come as you are. Bring a question if you like. During my first meeting there were six of us in attendance, and only 2 came with prepared questions; however, spontaneous questions were addressed and a pleasurable time was had by all! I've added attendance to my monthly calendar . . . Will you?

- Tara McMilin



El Salvador Sister Parish News

Prayer Children for 2025 - The scholarship committee in Guillermo Ungo has been hard at work selecting students for 2025 scholarships. We expect to receive the new list very soon.

Once that happens, we will communicate with you to confirm your commitment to your prayer child for the new year. Some students have graduated and others may have moved or left the program for another reason. In that case, we will ask you if you want to choose another prayer child and what your preferences are as to gender and age. Watch for email from Santa Cruz al Salvador for your update.

2025 Delegation - It is likely there will be a delegation to our communities in November 2025. It's never too soon to tell us about your interest in traveling to El Salvador with our group.

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

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Santa Cruz al Salvador (SCaS), I wish to thank everyone at St. Stephen's who have contributed toward the latrines in El Pilar, scholarships in Guillermo Ungo, or University Scholarships.

Your gifts make a difference!

Peace in Christ,
Kent Madsen and Jeanne Boudreau,
Representatives on the SCaS Board



*Chad Bell (Trinity Presbyterian)
with his Prayer Child last November*

March Benevolence Offering

St. Stephen's Scholarship Fund

Over the years we have been blessed to receive several bequests from former members that make up our present scholarship fund. Many of St. Stephen's youth have benefited from this fund as they further their education in college while costs continue to rise. We attempt to use the interest only from this fund, but sometimes we need to dip into the principal in order to fulfill the requests. This month you can give a special offering in addition to your regular offering in order to keep this fund healthy well into the future. Maybe you, too, could think about including the St. Stephen's Scholarship Fund in your will or estate plans as others before us have. This is a multiplying gift as it enables someone else to develop their God-given gifts in service to others (as seen below).

During this past semester I started my studies in multimedia at California Lutheran University. I am currently learning how to use resources that will help with my future aspirations in game design. On campus I have found a strong sense of community in joining my roommate for his weekly radio show on iCLU radio and going on spontaneous late night adventures with my friends. Going to a Lutheran university has really helped me stay in touch with my faith by learning about the origins of our religion as a whole. - SOFIA BARTEE



As I wrap up my last semester and prepare for a send off into the post-school life, I am becoming more aware of the value in community formation the church instilled in me. The connections I have made over the past 4 years are those that will shape and guide the upcoming years of uncertainty. I have been privileged enough to conduct independent research in Berlin and Northern Germany, cultivate a community of like minded mycologists through a school funded Club of 3 years, and facilitate the learning process of many students through T.A.-ing and designing course curriculum in the field of microbiology and fermented foods. I have been keeping active in the Berkeley research scene, as well, by currently working on a project that seeks to define nuclear neighborhoods and with fungal strain development for biofuel production and waste management. It is a lot of genetic work!

I am deeply grateful for my community in the church and have tried to embody Proverbs 11:25 throughout my last year in school, "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." I plan to continue watering wherever I can and to continue cultivating and growing community following graduation! - NATHAN LAPP

Birthdays & Anniversaries

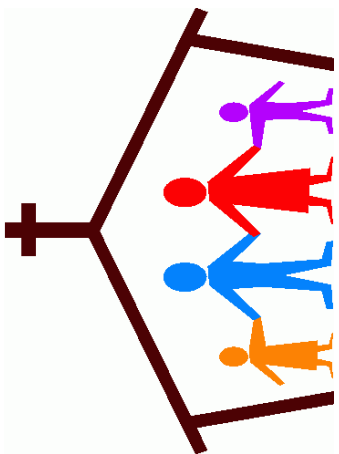
3-5	Steven Pond	3-18	Shelby Volpi	3-28	Steven
3-6	Bev Hickman	3-19	Oliver Spires		Hendrickson
3-7	Christa W. Garcia	3-20	Peggy Crews	3-10	Steve & Julie
3-8	Judy Russell	3-22	Elizabeth		Mouw
3-12	Theresa Loback		Balogh	3-16	Bill & Sherilyn
	- Campbell	3-23	Sheila Buswell		Jager
3-12	Tina Gates	3-23	Polly	3-19	Brad & Shawn
3-17	Aeden Hughes		Cappelloni		Cramer
3-18	Keith Slay	3-24	Dean Slay		



Prayer Concerns

SHORT TERM: Laura, Margaret, Bill Giles family, Dr. Bruce Dunn's family, Grey, Ruth Stiles, Susan Birkelo Family, James, Riley, Mary Saccullo, Chad Fields, Ana Cardenas, Rose, Levi, Lisa J., John B., Linda, Scoutmaster Scott, Glosier family, Unemployed, George Webber, Isaac & Marissa, Chris Powers, Gloria, Beth & Family of Barbara Stiles, Marta's parents, Gary & Louse Matz, Friends in Tel Aviv, Nick, James, Mary D., Tom, Galahad, Debbie, Sam, Nate Barker, Robbin, Francisco, Michael, Keith, Noelle, Ensley, Sierra, Middle East Peace, Tom Dawson, Taiyo, Marissa, Isaac, Alvarado family, Dustin, Father Jack Davis, Sandi Csik, Sam, Adolfo, Elida, Jeannie, Anetta, Jane, Barbara Allen, Gary & Marjie Toops, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Nancy, Mateo & Lina, Don, Atlas, Sal, Katarina, Stephanie Jager.

LONG TERM: Those suffering with Mental Illness, James Sheehan, Biergiel—Colclough family, Carla Brown, Eric Utto-Galarneau, Joel Hurtgamm, Dawit and family (Ethiopia), April McCalmont, Marty Nehring, Miller Mouw, Kyle Lapp, Will, Aaron Johnson, Shelby Volpi, Ashley, Frank, Joe, Dom, Lisa & Beau, Linda Johnson, Bailey Ingalls, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, Bobbie Erickson, Mike, 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, People of Palestine/Israel, Our Nation's leaders, Mt. Cross, St. Stephen's Child Development Ctr, S.S. Senior Housing, 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
February 27, 2025**

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

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

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