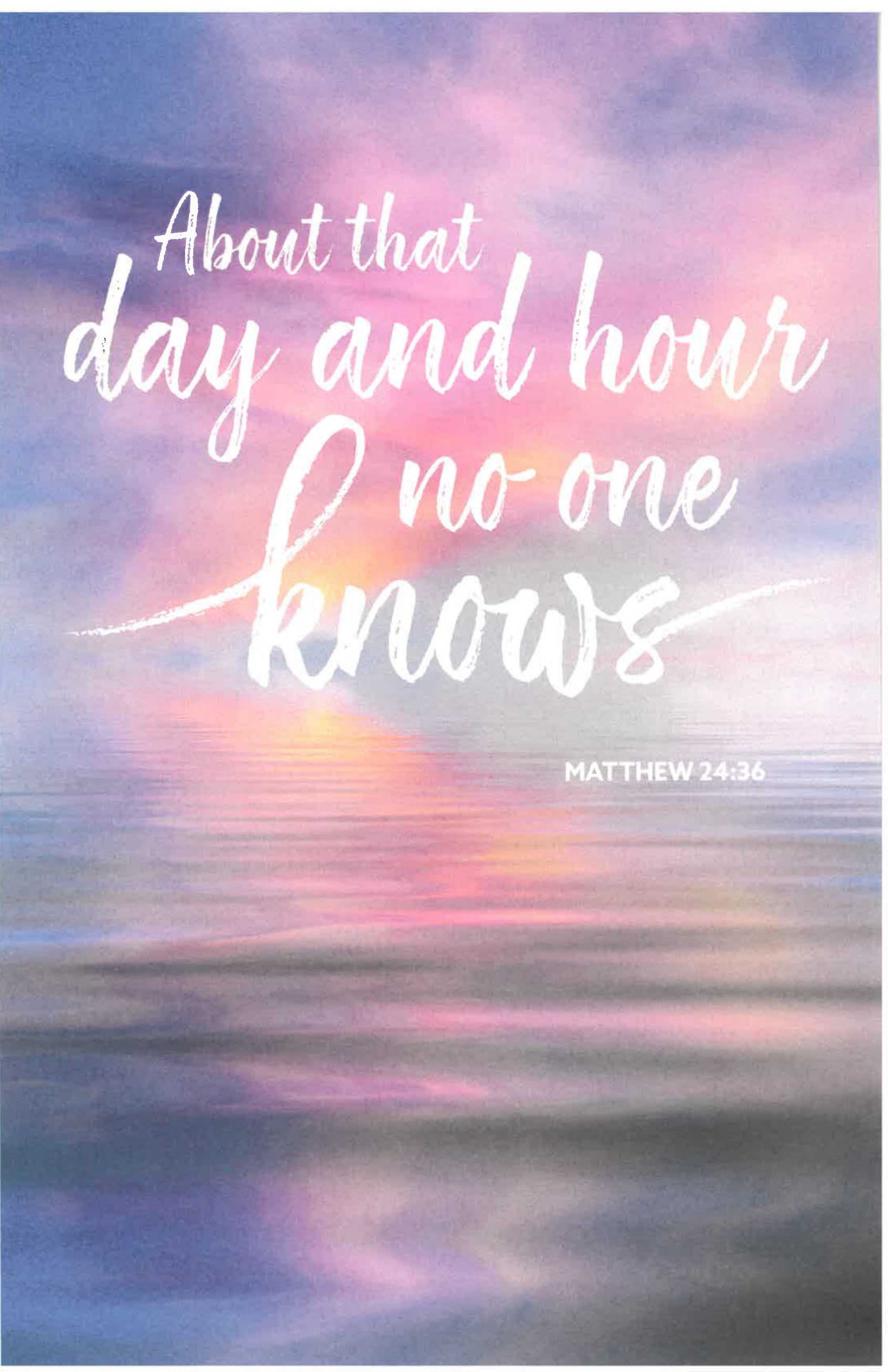




About that
day and hour
no one
knows

MATTHEW 24:36



November 30, 2025

The First Sunday of Advent

--- *What do you fear?*

**in the time of Herod,
we long for God to break in**

Matthew 2 | Lamentations 3:55-57

Welcome to people new to this church or faith, long time Lutherans, and Christians from every tradition. Welcome to all who have no church home, want to follow Christ, have doubts, or do not believe. Welcome to new visitors and old friends. Welcome to people of every age and size, color and culture, sexual orientation and marital status, ability and challenge. Welcome to believers and questioners and questioning believers. This is a place where you are welcome to celebrate and sorrow, rejoice and recover. This is a place where lives are made new. Welcome on this day.

Music “Emmanuel, God With Us Give Us Hope”

Choir Introit—”Blessed be the God of Israel”

Call to Confession

Friends, if you long to feel closer to God,
then the Prayer of Confession is a step in the right direction.
For in the Prayer of Confession,
we lay our hearts and our broken world before God.
We pour out the truth of our lives
and the way the world is.
We do not hide anything from our Creator,
and in that simple act,
God somehow always feels closer.
So join me in this prayer.
Join me as we invite God to draw closer,
to break in here.

Prayer of Confession

**Ever-present God,
we long to feel you close.
We long to feel your presence in our lives.
We long for you to break through
the chaos and suffering of this world.
However, if we're honest, we rarely stand still
long enough to experience you in our midst.
Forgive our rushing and distractions.
Forgive our wandering hearts, and center us in this space.
Remind us that even in the time of the Herods of the world,
even on the longest nights, you are always there. Amen.**

Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith,
even when we doubt God's presence,
even when we fail to notice God's fingerprints in this world,
God is always moving closer to us.
Hear and believe the good news this Advent season:

**Nothing can keep God's love away.
We are seen. We are forgiven. We are not alone. Amen.**

*Opening Hymn

“Awake , Awake, and Greet the New Morn” Red #242

**Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
Behold the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
he opens wide the heav'nly door
and lives now inside us forever.**

(Hymn Continued)

To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a singing,
his humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing;
music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of his anthems roll
to shatter all hatred and blindness.

In darkest night his coming shall be
when all the world is despairing,
as morning light so quiet and free,
so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song,
the lame shall leap in wonder,
the weak be raised above the strong,
and weapons be broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though dark the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer
and love our endless story;
may God fill ev'ry day we share
and bring us at last into glory.

*Greeting

P: The steadfast love of God, the life of Jesus Christ
and the power of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Call to Worship

On Sundays and Mondays,
on good days and bad days,
early in the morning and very late at night,
here in this room, and out in the world,
God, we long for you to break in.

Meet us in this space.

Surprise us with your presence.

Fill this room with your good news.

With hope, we sing, we worship, we pray. Amen!

Candle Lighting — Hope

When the world seems full of fear, where do you see hope?

We see hope when we look to the next generation.

We feel hopeful when we gather together.

We know hope, deep in our bones,

When we dream of a better world.

You are right.

Even in a fearful world, hope is all around us.

Today we light the candle of hope

as a reminder of this good news.

May this flicker of light help us remember that

We have reason to hope.

(Light candle)

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Kyrie

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” # 257 vs. 1 ~ 2

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

REFRAIN

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, O Wisdom from on high
embracing all things far and nigh:
in strength and beauty come and stay;
Teach us your will and guide our way. REFRAIN

Hymn of Praise

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” #270 vs 1 & 3

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.”
Joyful, all you nations, rise;
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

REFRAIN

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn king!”

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth REFRAIN

*Prayer of the Day

P: May God be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us Pray. Celebrate pg. 1

The Word of God

God Stories

First Reading Isaiah 2:1-5 Celebrate pg. 1

L: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 122 Choir & Congregation Celebrate pg. 2

Second Reading Romans 13:11-14 Celebrate pg. 3

P: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

(Please stand as you are able)

Gospel Acclamation

“Angels We Have Heard on High” #289 vs. 1

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o’er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

G l o r i a . . . i n e x c e l s i s D e o
G l o r i a . . . i n e x c e l s i s D e o

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mathew

C: Glory to you, O God.

*Gospel Reading

Matthew 24:36-44

Celebrate pg. 3

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Rev. James Lapp

*Hymn of the Day

“Each Winter As the Year Grows Older”

#252

Each winter as the year grows older,
We each grow older too.
The chill sets in a little colder;
The verities we knew
Seem shaken and untrue.

When race and class cry out for treason,
When sirens call for war,
They overshout the voice of reason
And scream till we ignore
All we held dear before.

Yet I believe beyond believing,
That life can spring from death:
That growth can flower from our grieving;
That we can catch our breath
And turn transfixed by faith.

So even as the sun is turning
To journey to the north,
The living flame, in secret burning,
Can kindle on the earth
And bring God's love to birth.

O Child of ecstasy and sorrows,
O Prince of peace and pain,
Brighten today's world by tomorrow's,
Renew our lives again;
Lord Jesus, come and reign!

Affirmation of Faith

**We have seen the valley.
We have seen a sky without stars.
We have seen the longest night, and *still* we believe.
We believe in a with-us God.
We believe that good news is louder than fear.
We believe this good news is for all people.
So even when our knees shake,
even when our voice trembles,
even when fear is all around us,
we will hold onto that good news.
We will reach for each other.
We will look for God in our midst.
We will sing songs of joy.
We will proclaim: *Unto us, love is born.*
We have seen the longest night,
and we have seen unimaginable love.
So *still*, we believe. Amen.**

***Prayers of the People**

In-breaking God,
we remember that you are a God that draws near.
You are a God that breaks into the messy middle of our lives
to offer hope, love, and good news.
You are a God who sees our fears
and offers words of comfort.
So once more, present God, we bow our heads.
Once more we quiet the racing thoughts in our minds.
Once more we allow our spirits to lean toward you
like trees in the wind.
And as we do, we bring you our prayers.
God, today we are grateful
for the many amazing things in this world that leave us speech-
less.

*Prayers of Intercession

Celebrate pg. 4

Thank you for the beauty of nature
as we welcome a new season.
Thank you for the contagious joy of children.
Thank you for homemade meals
and the kindness of strangers.
Thank you for music that ascends our spirits,
and scripture that points to your presence.
It can be hard to put into words how grateful we truly are.
And all God's children said: **Amen.**

The Communion Meal

*Passing of the Peace

P: May the peace of God be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

Offering — We honor and worship God by returning some of
the gifts with which we have been blessed.

Music “Filled With Hope And Gratitude” #907

Offertory “O Come, All Ye Faithful” Red #283 vs. 1

O come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold him
Born the King of angels

REFRAIN

O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him
O come, let us adore him. Christ the Lord

*Eucharistic Prayer

We live in a fearful world.
If we're honest, we come to this Table today
with the taste of fear on our tongues.
We come to this Table carrying our anxiety.
We come to this Table asking for guidance.
We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs."

But you do not disregard our fear.
You do not brush it under the rug or call us foolish.
You do not ignore the realities in front of us.
You do not dish out empty or hurtful platitudes,
telling us to "toughen up" or "power through."
Instead, you meet us here.

You listen to our fears. You remind us that we are not alone.
You surround us with people who love us.
You show us where we are strong. You walk beside us.
And you give us a new song to sing.

So today we pray, gracious God:
replace the fear on our tongues
with words of hope and songs of joy.
As we come to this Table,
pour out your Spirit on this bread and cup.
Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are on the move.
Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are here,
inviting us to the Table, nourishing our spirits,
reminding us that we belong, calling us by name.

Instill that good news in us, for this is a joyful feast.
Fear is not the loudest voice today.
What a gift that is.
Now with hope for a better tomorrow,
we join our voices together in thanksgiving to you

*Great Thanksgiving

May God be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to God.

Let us give our thanks to God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*Words of Institution

*Lord's Prayer

**C: Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today, our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
Now and forever. Amen**

(You may be seated)

*Invitation to the Table

Here at this Table, there is enough room, enough food,
enough love for everyone.

Here at this Table, Jesus is standing up on his chair,
waving his hands over his head, saying to each of you,
“I saved you a seat!”

Here at this Table, you are wanted and welcomed.

Here at this Table, you are safe and loved.

Here at this Table, you belong.

So my friends, there is no need for fear here,
for this is a joyful feast, and you are invited.

Come. All are truly welcome.

Holy Communion

Guests; You are welcome to come forward to receive
Communion as part of this church family! Please receive
the bread and dip into the cup. The wine is red. The
grape juice is white. Children are always welcome to
come forward and receive Holy Communion or a special
blessing—parents please provide direction.

Lamb of God

“Love Has Come” Red #292 vs. 1 & 3

Love has come a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high!

Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us,
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Communion Hymn

“Come Now, O Prince of Peace” #247

1. Come, now, O Prince of peace, make us one body.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people.
2. Come now, O God of love, make us one body.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people.
3. Come now and set us free, O God, our Savior.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations.
4. Come, Hope of unity, make us one body.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations.

The Sending

*Communion Blessing

P: May this Holy Communion of our Lord Jesus Christ
strengthen you and keep you in God's grace
now and forever.

C: Amen.

* Prayer After Communion

Loving God,
When the world is racked with fear,
you gather us together.
You set the table. You meet us here.
You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits.
You remind us that this is a joyful feast,
and that fear cannot win every time.
So with renewed courage, with renewed hope,
with renewed conviction, send us out into the world.
Help us to feed others as you have fed us.
With gratitude we pray, **Amen.**

*Blessing

May you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
May you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
that good news is louder than fear.
In the Name of the One who calls,
+ the One who sends,
and the One who journeys with—
Amen.

*Closing Hymn

“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers” Red #244

Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing, and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
at midnight comes the cry.

The watchers on the mountain
proclaim the bridegroom near;
Go forth as he approaches with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting;
the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory; the bridegroom is at hand.

The saints, who here in patience
their cross and suff'rings bore,
Shall live and reign forever when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory
the Lamb they shall behold;
In triumph cast before him their diadems of gold.

Our hope and expectations, O Jesus, now appear;
Arise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted,
we plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption
that sets your people free!

*Dismissal

Go in peace and *Be Not Afraid*.
Thanks be to God!

Music “Hope For The World”

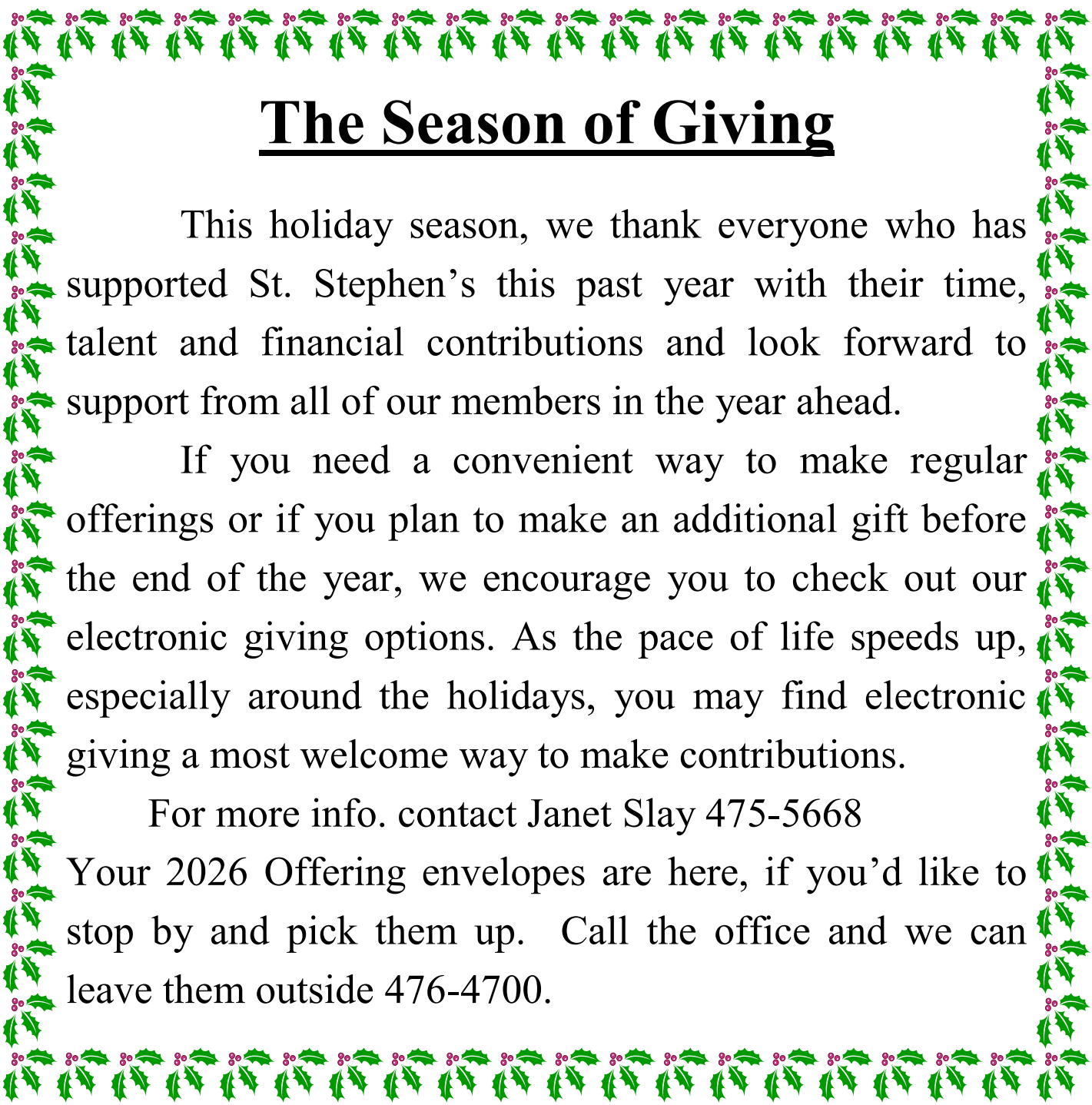
*The Altar Flowers are given by
Bill & Candace Anderson
Remembering Loved Ones who have passed*



Prayer Concerns

SHORT TERM

Margaret Schraft, Laura & twin babies, Don & Taiyo, Chris Wyneken, Gary & Connie Stevenson, Family of Bobbie Erickson, Kevin, Marc Northcott, Cheryl & David Craig, Beth, Liz, Joan Wilson Family, Sam, Florence, Tom Williams, Charlotte & family, Tim Oldfield, Kathy M., Nancy, Jennifer Linkeon, Corrine & Daniel, Connie Garcia & Family, Tina & family, Ana, Kathybelle Barlow, Family & friends of Rev. Jim Carr, Grey, Levi, James, Galahad, Debbie, Sam, Nate Barker, Robbin, Keith, Noelle, Ensley, Middle East Peace, Tom Dawson, Dustin, Father Jack Davis, Adolfo, Elida, Jeannie, Anetta, Jane, Barbara Allen, Gary & Marjie Toops, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Isaac & Marissa, Mateo & Lina, Atlas, Sal, Katarina, Stephanie Jager.



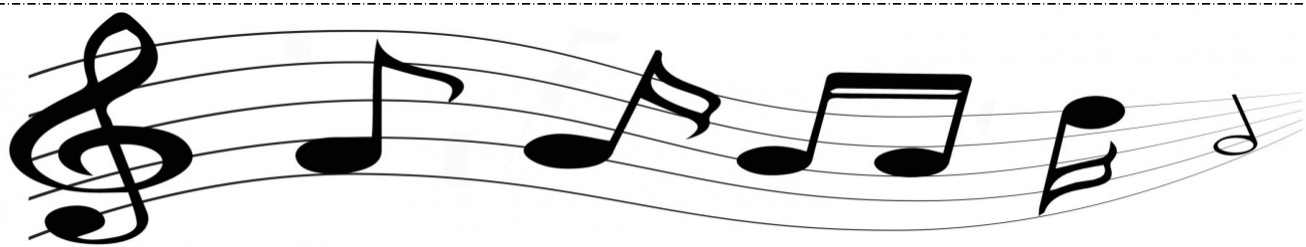
The Season of Giving

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 electronic giving options. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions.

For more info. contact Janet Slay 475-5668

Your 2026 Offering envelopes are here, if you'd like to stop by and pick them up. Call the office and we can leave them outside 476-4700.



Music at St. Stephen's

H O P E

For anyone who needs a little calm this season, we hope this morning brings you a brighter day, filled with the hope your days ahead are sunnier, happier, and time filled with the music of Advent.

This morning's choir Introit speaks of the God of Israel come to set us free, that leads to peace, and raises up a new hope for us. The tune is a wonderful folk, English melody by Ralph Von Williams.

We become complete, filled with gratitude, and will sing with soul and spirit, and exultation to Christ, and the world's salvation.

Welcome to your church, and the
Advent—Christmas Adventure!

Yours in Christ & Mission,
Gary



* Join the Christmas Choir *

Worship online at www.ststephenslutheran.org

Recorded for you to view anytime.

Please participate by having your worship bulletin and Celebrate ready

Zoom Bible Studies with Pastor Jim on Wednesdays 7:30pm.

Check your email on Wednesday for the link to the Zoom meeting.

Our 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,
invite people to share the joy of the spirit.

Reconciling in Christ

"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."

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church E.L.C.A.
2500 Soquel Avenue Santa Cruz, CA 95062
831/476-4700 FAX 831/476-3918
email: office@ststephenslutheran.org
Web Address: www.ststephenslutheran.org
Office Hours: Mon.—Friday. 12:00 —5:00 pm

Ministers: The People of St. Stephen's
Pastor: Rev. James P. Lapp
Church Administrator: Leslie Lapp
Church Musician: Gary Roberts
Sunday School: Leslie Lapp
Pre-School Director: Kathy Berens
Custodian: John Hopping
Videographers: Jay Johnston, Kent Madsen & Barb Rice

Music used by permission Onelicense #A-706539

Upcoming Events:

November Benevolence Offering -
Santa Cruz al Salvador Sister Parish

Nov. 24—Dec. 3 El Salvador Delegation

Dec. 1 Last day to Bring St. Nick items

Dec. 2 Scouts 6:00 pm

Dec. 2 Trinity Tuesday 6:30 pm - Discretion Brew 41st

Dec. 3 “Matthew” Bible Study Weds. 7:30 pm

Dec. 4 & 18 Women’s Café Group 6:00 pm Thursdays
Dinner and devotions (Bring your “hopes”)

Dec. 4 Mens beginner A.A. Thursdays 7:00 pm Fireside

Dec. 5 A.A. Fridays 7:00 pm Fellowship Hall

Dec. 7 Christmas Pageant
& Last day to bring Angel Tree gifts

Dec. 9 Church Council 6:30 pm

Dec. 11 MMRR Circle 10:30 am

Dec. 14 MMRR Bake Sale

Dec. 21 “All that Brass” joins worship
& Xmas Potluck (Gary’s bringing the Ham)

Pastor’s Office Hours Wed & Thurs. 10:00 to 1:00

Gospel of Matthew

Bible Study

Join us as we explore the tenderness and tensions in the teachings of Jesus through *Matthew: "The Gospel of Promised Blessings"* by Dr. Matthew Skinner. The six-week Bible study continues **each Wednesday, through December 17**. [See a short promo video](#) on Youtube!

You can [order the book for \\$10 on Kindle, ~\\$12.50 for paperback](#), or \$14 through Christa if you'd like her to order one for you. Scholarships are available!

If you don't have time to read between sessions or need to skip a week, that's perfectly fine. Come for the scripture and conversation whenever you can. Friends are always welcome. Submit any inquiries to [Christa Garcia](#) at christawynekengarcia@gmail.com

On ZOOM
with our Seminarian Christa

Check email on Tues. for link

WEDNESDAYS

7:30 – 8:30 pm

As we grow in our faith, we grow in community.