



WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD

MATTHEW 4:10

First Sunday in Lent

February 22, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

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 “O Light Whose Splendor Thrills”

The Gathering



the news is...

John 2:1-11; Matthew 13:31-32

so good it catches us by surprise

Call to worship

The good news of the gospel is:

**manna in the desert, water turned into wine,
love after loss, forgiveness after pain.**

The good news of the gospel is:

**release for the captive,
hope for the hopeless,
mourning turned to dancing,
and strangers turned to friends.**

So come on in.

There's no time to waste!

This surprising good news is here for you.

Let us worship this good-news God.

Call to confession

You may have heard, “All is fair in love and war,”
or “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”
But God says, “Forgive seventy times seven.”
God says, “I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”
God says, “Turn the other cheek.”
God’s mercy catches us by surprise.
So with wonder and gratitude, let us go to God in prayer.
Let us be surprised by God’s grace all over again.
Friends, let us pray:

Prayer of confession

**Loving God,
somewhere along the way we picked up the message that
in order to be faithful, we have to be serious.
We have to pray on our knees without ceasing.
We have to be somber in worship & quiet in our studies.
We have to check our wiggles
and our questions at the door.
But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard
seed—unruly and untamed.
You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant.
And all of a sudden, we wonder:
Can we be like that mustard seed?
Can we be faithful and unruly?
Can we be playful and curious?
Can we be messy and still be yours?
We know the answer already.
The Spirit whispers: *of course, of course, of course.*
Forgive our doubt.
Pull us closer into your embrace.
With faith like a mustard seed, we pray. Amen.**

Words of forgiveness

God's grace is wild and unruly.

God's mercy is abundant and surprising.

God's love is expansive and unending.

So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"

the answer is and always will be:

Of course, of course, of course.

This is the good news of the gospel.

Thanks be to God! Amen

*Opening Hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God" Red #505

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper frees us from the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe,
Forsworn to work us woe,
With guile and dreadful might
Is armed to wage the fight;
Aon earth there is no equal.

If we in our own strength confide,
Our striving turns to losing;
The righteous one fights b our side,
The one of God's own choosing.
You ask who this may be;
Christ Jesus, it is he,
The Lord of hosts by name.
No other God we claim!
None else can win the battle.

Though all the world with devils fill
And threaten to devour us,
We tremble not, we trust god's will;
They cannot overpow'r us.

* Prayer of the Day

Celebrate insert pg. 1

P: May God be with you.

C: and also with you.

P: Let us pray...

C: (following the prayer) Amen.

The Word of God

First Reading

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Celebrate pg. 1

L: Word of God. Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 32

Choir & Cong.

Celebrate pg. 2

Second Reading

Romans 5:12-19

Celebrate pg. 2

L: Word of God. Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Acclamation

GOSPEL

Cantor, then All



P: (Sung by Pastor) One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

C: **(Sing: “Glory to you..” twice)**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mathew the 4th Chapter

C: **Glory to you O God.**

*Gospel Reading

Matthew 4:1-11

Celebrate pg. 3

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God**

Sermon

Rev. James P. Lapp

*Hymn of the Day

“When We are Tested”

BLUE #922

When we are tested and wrestle alone,
famished for bread when the world offers stone,
nourish us, God, by your word and your way,
food that sustains us by night and by day.

When in the desert we cry for relief,
pleading for paths marked by certain belief,
lift us to love you beyond sign and test,
trusting your presence, our only true rest.

When we are tempted to barter our souls,
trading the truth for power to control,
teach us to worship and praise only you,
seeking your will in the work that we do.

When we have struggled and searched through the night,
sorting and sifting the wrong from the right,
Savior, surround us with circles of care,
angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.

An Affirmation of Faith

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

**It sounds like welcome
and feels like home.**

**It sounds like laughter
and feels like mercy.**

**It sounds like love
and feels like a seat at the table,
so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.**

**I have seen it alive in the world.
And even when my heart aches,
even when wars rage,
even when mercy feels out of reach,**

**I remember the one who
welcomed the children
and led with nonviolence.**

**I remember the one who
cared for the vulnerable
and inspired those around him.**

**I remember that the good news really is good news,
for I have seen it alive in the world.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

*The Prayers of the Church

Celebrate, Page 4

(Please offer a petition out loud from where you are.)

*Passing of the Peace

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

C: And also with you.

The Communion Meal

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

Music “As Your Spirit in the Desert”
 Michael D. Costello 1979

*Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray.

C: Gracious Provider,
You have set your immense treasures among us,
Opening your heart to the world.
As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love,
Deepen our commitment
To sharing those treasures with others.
Through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Great Thanksgiving

P: May God be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up to God.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Eucharistic Prayer

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy.....

*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**

Invitation to Communion

P: All who are hungry, come! The feast of grace is spread.

Holy Communion ALL, Yes — EVERYONE IS WELCOME!
Communion is by intinction, we dip the bread into either
the wine (red) or grape juice (white).

AGNUS DEI

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world,
Repeat as needed
have mer - cy on us. *Last time* Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Hymn

"I Want Jesus To Walk With Me"

Red #325

I want Jesus to walk with me;
I want Jesus to walk with me;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
When my heart is almost breaking,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me;
When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me;
When my head is bowed in sorrow,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

*Communion Blessing

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

C: Amen.

*Prayer after Communion

P: Generous Host, You have shared your feast with us
and made us new. Send us now to set tables of love
and grace in our communities, that your liberating love
might nourish the world into freedom,
in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

The Sending

*Blessing

P: As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.
For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all.
So go forth speaking. For if you won't, then who will?
Thanks be to God for this good, *good* news.

C: Amen

*Closing Hymn “Cast Out, O Christ” BLUE #1016

Cast out, O Christ, cast far away
the demons that destroy;
The haunting dreads that choke our souls,
the hates that stifle joy.

Our raging griefs, our jealous fears
are Legion in their name.
Our shackled hearts implore your grace
to loose our binding shame.

Once long, ago, from Galilee,
you sailed to storm-tossed shores.
And still, in pow'r, you brave new paths
To breach our bolted doors.

Your word breathes life and health and hope
That break through evil's thrall.
You send us, strengthened,
Home in peace to live your gospel call.

So come, O Christ, and cast away
the demons that destroy.
Transform our lives to sense your love
and spread abroad your joy.

*Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

C: Thanks be to God.

Music “Praise, Praise! You are my Rock”
 Rusty Edwards 1955

Serving Today

Reader: Steven Hendrickson

Altar Guild: Tina Gates

Coffee Host : Connie Cunningham

Office Help: Candace, Sheila & Sherilyn

* Sign up to Read, Host Coffee & Dedicate Altar Flowers *



SHORT TERM

Family of Pr. Herb Schmidt, Family of Marc Northcott, Camryn, Corbin, Marilyn, Nathan, Dorothy Ronning, Bob Holzwarth, Amanda, Mary Robe & Family, Renee, Family of Laura Gates, Sina & Bella, Chad Fields, Laura, Ayla, Beth Stiles, Margaret Schraft, Laura & twin babies, James, Don & Taiyo, Pr. Gary & Corinne Stevenson, Family of Bobbie Erickson, Kevin, Beth, Liz, Sam, Florence, Tom Williams, Tim Oldfield, Kathy M., Nancy, Corrine & Daniel, Connie Garcia & Family, 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.

LONG TERM Those suffering with Mental Illness, James Sheehan, Biergiel—Colclough family, Eric Utto-Galarneau, Beth UG, Brian Utto, Kathy Brooks, Joel Hurtgamm, Dawit & family (Ethiopia), Miller, April, Aaron Johnson, Shelby, Ashley, Frank, Joe, Lisa & Beau, Linda Johnson, Jan Shadle, Vi Olly, Mike, Susan Anderson, Brouse Family, Janet Baker, Sandy Godvine, Janelle Yung, Karin, Will, Chris & John B., 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.

** Please notify when to remove **

Missing a pew buddy?



A phone call to someone who is not here goes a long way.



The good news is...

so good it catches us by surprise

Start With a Wedding

Inspired by the Gospel of John's celebratory beginning.

When it comes time to write my obituary for the local paper, please do not start with my résumé.

Do not start with my career or my worldly accomplishments (*however small they may be*).

Do not take up space writing about my alma mater or outlining the entire family tree (*we know who we are*).

Instead, spend your precious little word count on how beautiful it all was.

Write about the dinner parties and the fireside chats.

Write about the evenings we spent on the front stoop counting fireflies.

Write about summers in the mountains and the garden that we grew.

Write about the seasons we cried out to God, and the prayers that God answered.

Write about the nights we danced, and the days we laughed.

When it comes time to tell the story of my life, please take a lesson from the Gospel of John, and start with a wedding. Start with a miracle. Start with the fact that all of it held joy.

LENT is about BECOMING,
DOING,
and CHANGING,

WHATEVER IT IS
THAT IS BLOCKING THE FULLNESS OF LIFE
IN US RIGHT NOW.

Sister Joan Chittister, OSB

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*“Lent offers us the practical and effective
weapons of fasting and almsgiving
as a means of combating
an excessive attachment to money.
Giving not only from our abundance,
but sacrificing something more
in order to give to the needy,
fosters that self-denial which is essential
to authentic Christian living.”*

Pope John Paul II



Lenten Wednesdays
6:00 pm
(Worship 7:00pm)



Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18 & 25

Lent invites us into a unique season of slowing down, listening deeply, and opening our hearts to spiritual renewal. Instead of focusing only on what we give up, Lent encourages us to let go of what weighs us down and make space for grace, strength, and hope. As a church family, we walk through these 40 days together—praying, supporting one another, and trusting God’s guidance. With this spirit of reflection and renewal, we invite you to join us for the services that will shape our Lenten journey.

Other Giving Options

We are now able to receive donations made by:
credit card, debit card, PayPal, Venmo & Zelle.

There are three choices:

- 1) **Vanco**, our regular electronic giving provider;
- 2) **PayPal / Venmo / Zelle** for single one-time gifts;
- 3) **PayPal** with the possibility of recurring donations and an option to cover the fees. All are available at <https://ststephenslutheran.org>





PANCAKE BREAKFAST & EASTER CELEBRATION

Sunday, April 5

- Apply for a Thrivent Action Team Grant.
Contact Leslie or Tina **ASAP**.
- Set up, servers & clean up. See sign up sheet.
- Help with Childrens activities during worship
& egg hunt after
- Sign up to order an Easter Lily to help
decorate the sanctuary.
- Plan ahead and invite folks.
Let them see “our light shine”.

Upcoming Events:

February Benevolence Offering = Association of Faith Communities Rotating Shelter & Safe Spaces

- Feb. 24 TBD - Beati Quorum Choir rehearsal
- Feb. 24 Scouts 6:00 pm
- Feb. 25 Preschool Chapel 10:15 am
- Feb. 25 Lent Worship 11 am & 7 pm TAIZE
- Feb. 25 Soup Suppers begin 6:00 pm
Sign up now
- Feb. 26 Newsletter Collating 1:00 pm
- Feb. 26 Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm
- Feb. 27 A. A. Group 7:00 pm
- March 3 Trinity Tuesday 6:30 pm Discretion Brewery
come for honest conversation and genuine community
- March 10 Church Council 6:30 pm
- March 12 Women's Circle of Promise 10:30 am
- March 13-15 Mt. Cross Women's Retreat
- March 29 Palm Sunday Dramatic Worship
Readers needed
- April 2 & 3 Maundy Thursday 11 & 7 and Good Friday 7pm
- April 18 Pr. Herb Schmidt Memorial 1:00 Messiah Luth.

Pastor's Office Hours Wednesdays 10 to 1:00

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.
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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

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