

# Ash Wednesday Service

February 18, 2026

11:00 am & 7:00 pm

the good news is...

Luke 9:51-62

**all are invited**

Welcome

Call to worship

If God threw a party,  
**all would be invited.**

If God hosted a dinner,  
**there'd be a seat saved for each of us.**

If God prepared a banquet,  
**a cheer would go up when you arrived.**

This is the good news:

**God is throwing a party.**

**God is hosting a dinner.**

**God is preparing a banquet,**  
**and all are invited.**

Let us worship this invitational God.

Psalm 51

(read responsively)

Celebrate pg.2

Prayer of the Day

Celebrate pg.1

First Lesson

Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17

Second Lesson

2 Corinthians 5:20b- 6:10

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Homily

Pastor Lapp

Hymn of the Day

"Let My Spirit Always Sing"

Blue #1020

Invitation to Lent

### Call to confession

Family of faith,  
if someone declines our invitations again and again,  
in our human ways, we tend to stop inviting them.  
We get the hint. We assume they'd rather be elsewhere.  
With God, however, things are different.  
No matter how many times we overlook or ignore God's outstretched hand,  
God will never stop reaching for us.  
So with that good news in mind, let us go to God in prayer.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

### Prayer of confession

**Gracious God,**

**you invite all of us to your table:**

**the faithful and the doubting, the restless and the hopeless,  
the addicted and the lonely, the lost and the confused.**

**You invite all of us, regardless of who we are or where we've been,  
but we fail to do the same.**

**When given the opportunity,**

**we are guilty of casting judgment on our neighbors.**

**We draw lines, assume the worst, create cliques, and accept exclusion.**

**Forgive our harmful ways.**

**This Lent, show us how to love others the way you love us.**

**With hope we pray, amen.**

## Words of forgiveness

Friends, no matter how many times we mess up,  
no matter how many times we lose our way,  
no matter how many times we decline God's invitation,  
God will never stop inviting us to the table.  
There is and always will be a seat saved for you.  
So join me in these good news words:  
**We are forgiven, again and again.**  
**We are invited, again and again.**  
**We are loved, from beginning to end.**  
**Thanks be to God, our Inviter. Amen.**

Imposition of Ashes — Please come forward to the altar

## Prayer for illumination

Table-setting God,  
this Lent we do not want to miss your invitation.  
We do not want to be so caught up in our own business  
that we miss the holiness right in front of us.  
So settle our hearts, and open our spirits to hear your word anew.  
Help us hear your good news today.  
With hope we pray, amen.

## Affirmation of faith

We believe in a table-setting God  
**who always has a seat saved for you.**  
We believe in an inviting God  
**who leaves the porch light on and a hand extended.**  
We believe in a radically welcoming God  
**who eats with the overlooked and the outcast,**  
**the hungry and the downtrodden.**  
We believe in the good news of the gospel, which reminds us  
**that all are welcomed, all are celebrated,**  
**all are loved, and all are claimed.**  
Pull up a seat at God's table.  
**There is good news to be shared here. Amen.**

Prayers

Celebrate pg. 4

Sharing of the Peace

Offering

Offertory Prayer

ELW pg. 107

Great Thanksgiving

pg. 107

Words of Institution

pg. 111

Lord's Prayer

pg. 112

Holy Communion — Please come forward to the altar.

Benediction

(We leave in silence as a sign of the humility  
of the beginning of the Lenten season)

+++

Words for worship  
for Lent-Easter  
*Written by Rev. Sarah A. Speed*



## Lenten Worship Services

Every Wednesday through March 25

Soup Suppers 6:00 pm (Sign up to host)  
&  
Holden Evening Prayer 7:00 pm

## Holy Week

Maundy Thursday—11:00 am worship & soup lunch  
7:00 pm worship  
Good Friday - 7:00 pm worship

## April 5 Easter Celebration

Pancake Breakfast - 9:00 am  
Worship - 10:00 am  
Children's activities

# Upcoming Events:

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

*Easter Lilies for sale today through March 23*

Feb. 20	Newsletter Deadline Noon
Feb. 24	Scouts 6:00 pm
Feb. 25	Preschool Chapel 10:15 am
Feb. 25	Soup Suppers begin 6:00 pm - Sign up now
Feb. 25	Taize Service 7:00 pm (after soupper)
Feb. 26	Newsletter Collating 2:00 pm
Feb. 26	Thursday Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm
Feb. 27	Friday 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 6:60 pm
March 13-15	Mt. Cross Women's Retreat
March 14	Embroider's Guild 10—4pm
March 29	Palm Sunday Dramatic Worship—readers needed
April 4	Set up Easter Breakfast 10:00 am

**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.  
2500 Soquel Avenue Santa Cruz, CA 95062  
831/476-4700 FAX 831/476-3918  
email: [office@ststephenslutheran.org](mailto:office@ststephenslutheran.org)  
Web Address: [www.ststephenslutheran.org](http://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

Prayer by / Sanctified Art, LLC