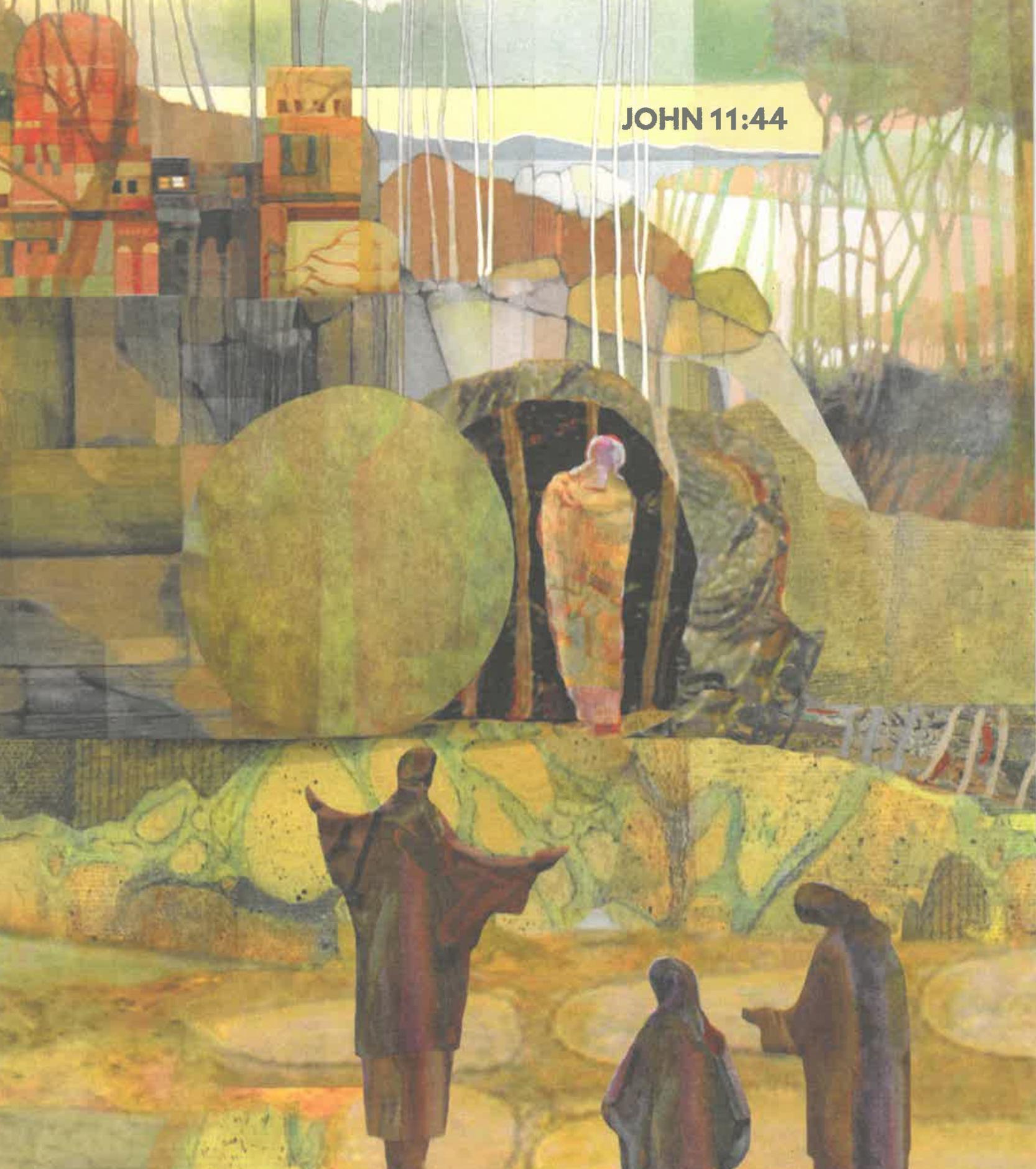


UNBIND HIM, AND LET HIM GO

JOHN 11:44



Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 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 Morning Star ow Fair & Bright” J.S. Bach



The Gathering

is...

John 8:2-11; Matthew 23:23

rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness

Call to worship

Welcome to the weary and the worn.

Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.

Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.

Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.

Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.

Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.

Welcome to the sinners and the saints.

This is God's house.

You can make yourself at home here.

Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

Call to confession

Jesus once said to a crowd, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.”

Friends, none of us are without sin.

None of us get it right *all* the time.

None of us can get by without God's grace.

In the Prayer of Confession, we acknowledge this truth.
We put down our stones
and we turn to God for forgiveness.
Join me in this act of transformation.
Let us pray:

Prayer of confession

**Holy God,
we love to live our lives by the rules.
We love clear answers.
We love right and wrong.
We love swift justice.
We love to pick up stones,
but you show us another way.
You welcome shades of gray and nuanced conversation.
You prioritize mercy over legality.
You prioritize people over tradition.
You prioritize love over everything.
Forgive us for losing sight of what truly matters.
Forgive us for clinging tighter to laws than to each other or to you.
Forgive us. Soften our hearts.
Root us in mercy, justice, and love.
With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray. Amen.**

Words of forgiveness

Church family,
Jesus saw a crowd ready to throw stones and invited them to choose another way.
Jesus offered them grace, mercy, and compassion,
and the same can be said for us.
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:
**Our God is a God of mercy.
Our God is a God of compassion.
Our God is a God of grace.
We are forgiven, loved, and invited to choose another way.
Thanks be to God for yet another second chance.
Amen.**

*Opening Hymn

"Morning Has Broken"

Red #556

Morning has broken, like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning!
Praise for the springing, fresh from the world!

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall, on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden.
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

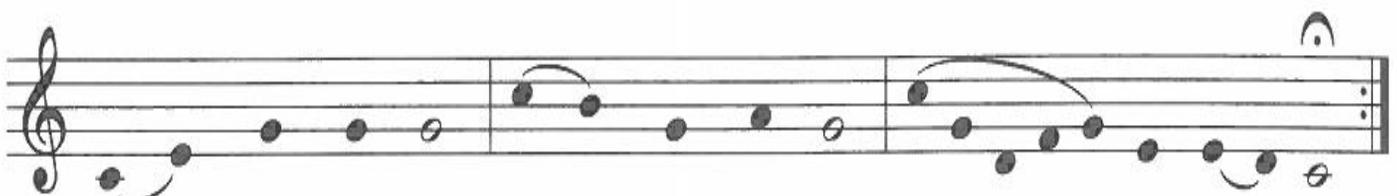
Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,
born of the One Light, Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!

* Greeting

*P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Kyrie— We bring our burdens, cares and hopes for God's mercy



1. Lord, have mer-cy.	Lord, have mer-cy.	Lord,	have mer-cy.
2. Christ, have mer-cy.	Christ, have mer-cy.	Christ,	have mer-cy.
3. Lord, have mer-cy.	Lord, have mer-cy.	Lord,	have mer-cy.

* 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

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Celebrate pg. 1

L: Word of God. Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 130

Choir & Cong.

Celebrate pg. 2

Second Reading

Romans 8:6-11

Celebrate pg. 2

L: Word of God. Word of Life

C: Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Acclamation

GOSPEL

Cantor, then All

Glo-ry to you, Word of God, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Glo-ry to you, Word of God, Lord Je - sus Christ.

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. John the 11th Chapter

C: Glory to you O God.

*Gospel Reading

John 11:1-45

Celebrate pg. 3

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God

Sermon

Rev. James P. Lapp

*Hymn of the Day

“Waterlife” Red #457

Before I can remember the covenant was sealed
With Father, Son, and Spirit, in water was revealed.
The cleansing was for certain, with water and the Word;
Gentle words were spoken, in heaven they were heard.

REFRAIN

They were singing waterlife, beginning life, waterlife
All my life, waterlife, Spirit life, waterlife.

A simple sweet beginning, a loving place to start:
Christ began the singing that swells within my heart.
His love became my calling, his life my ministry.
His name is my adoption into his family. REFRAIN

My hope and expectation for true community
Begins with resurrection, his death and life in me.
His Spirit fills the Body: his church through water sees
Promise for tomorrow, his waterlife in me. REFRAIN

Holy Baptism

Charlotte Olivia Judd

Dahlia Mae Judd

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.**

(continued next page)

**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 the Winter Days Grow Longer”

*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 Am the Bread of Life" Red #485

**"I am the Bread of life.
You who come to me shall not hunger,
And who believe in me shall not thirst.
No one can come to me
unless the Father beckons."**

REFRAIN

“And I will raise you up,
and I will raise you up,
and I will raise you up
on the last day.”

“The bread that . . . I will give
Is my flesh for the life of the world,
And if you eat . . . of this bread,
You shall live forever.
You shall live forever.”

REFRAIN

“Unless . . . You . . . eat
Of the flesh of the Son of Man
And...drink . . . of his blood, and
Drink . . . of his blood,
You shall not have life within you.”

REFRAIN

“I am the resurrection,
I . . . am the life.
If you believe . . . In . . . me,
Even..though you die,
You shall live forever.”

REFRAIN

Yes, Lord, . . . I believe
That . . . you. . . are the Christ,
The . . . Son . . . Of . . . God,
Who . . . have . . . come
Into . . . the . . . world.

REFRAIN

*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

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" Red #886

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and king,
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth
abroad the honors of your name.

The name of Jesus calms our fears
and bids our sorrows cease,
Sings music in the sinner's ears,
brings life and health and peace.

He speaks, and list'ning to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

Look unto him, your Savior own,
O fallen human race!
Look and be saved through faith alone,
Be justified by grace!

To God all glory, praise, and love
Be now and ever giv'n
By saints below and saints above,
The church in earth and heav'n.

*Dismissal

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

C: Thanks be to God.

Music "Through the Night of Doubt & Darkness"

Serving Today

Reader: Bill Anderson
Altar Guild: Candace Anderson
Coffee Host : Don, Rosie & Candace
Office Help: Candace, Sheila & Sherilyn

*Missing a pew buddy?
A phone call goes a long way.*



SHORT TERM Beth Stiles & her father, Kat, Penny, 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, 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.



Hello, My Name is Crystal. I Am writing This Letter To say Thank YOU for adopting My Family for christmas. As i am A SINGLE MOTHER, IT GETS HARD SPECIALLY During The Holidays. This has been a big help for me because the kids ask for everything and I'm not able to get them much. thankfully this year will be better, i am excited for The kids. i know they will be happy and appreciate Anything that is given to them. thanks for helping out my famin in need.

With so much love and appreciation,

Aaligan
Uziel
&
Crystal ♡

MERRY XMAS & HAPPY NEW Year!

HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO YOU!

Dear “Angel Tree” Adopt-a-Family Friends,
The results are in! This past holiday season, nearly **4,000 people** in our community experienced holiday magic *because of you*. From children receiving their first bikes to seniors finding a lifeline of connection, you created a wave of kindness that reached every corner of Santa Cruz County.

"The brightest part of our holiday was you...thank you!"

With love, Zoe, Marisol, and Juan

But wait! There's more to your impact:

Because of your outpouring of support, we partnered with the **Center for Farmworker Families** and **Barrios Unidos** to provide specialized, trust-based distributions for families who did not feel safe participating in more public campaigns. You ensured that safety was never a barrier to holiday joy, and that even more neighbors in our community felt seen and cared for.

"You have no idea how much you helped our family..."

~Toni and the kids

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

+ + + + + + + + + + + + +

*“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



**Last
Lenten Wednesday
6:00 pm
(Worship 7:00pm)**



March 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

- Set up, servers & clean up. See sign up sheet.
 - Help with Children's activities during worship.
 - Last Chance
 Sign up to order a Lily to help decorate the sanctuary
 - Plan ahead and invite folks.
 Let them see "our light shine".
 - Thank you Sandi Crouser - Thrivent Action Team Grant
-



“COPA After Church”
Sunday, March 29th
11:20a – 12:30p

Plan to stay after worship to meet with Pastor Jim and COPA Associate Organizer Eli Holliday. We will discuss our current efforts for justice in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, as well as our hopes for future relationships and actions with other churches and organizations.

Upcoming Events:

March Benevolence Offering =
St. Stephen's Scholarship Fund

- March 24 Scouts 6:00 pm
- March 25 Preschool Chapel 10:15 am
- March 25 Lenten Wednesday
Souper 6:00 pm (Hosts: Shelly Barker & Leslie)
Worship 7 pm
- March 26 Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm
- March 27 A. A. Group 7:00 pm
- March 29 Palm Sunday Dramatic Worship
- April 2 Maundy Thursday "The Last Supper"
worship 11 & lunch 12:00
Worship 7 pm
- April 3 Good Friday worship "The 7 Last Words" 7pm
- April 4 Easter Set up 10 am
- April 5 Easter Celebration Worship 10 am
Pancake Breakfast 8:30 to 9:45
- April 7 Trinity Tuesday 6:30 pm Discretion Brewery
come for honest conversation and genuine community
- April 18 Pr. Herb Schmidt Memorial 1:00 Messiah, High St.
- May 22-25 Mt. Cross Memorial Day work weekend
- May 30 AFC dinner hosts needed to serve the unhoused.

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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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
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