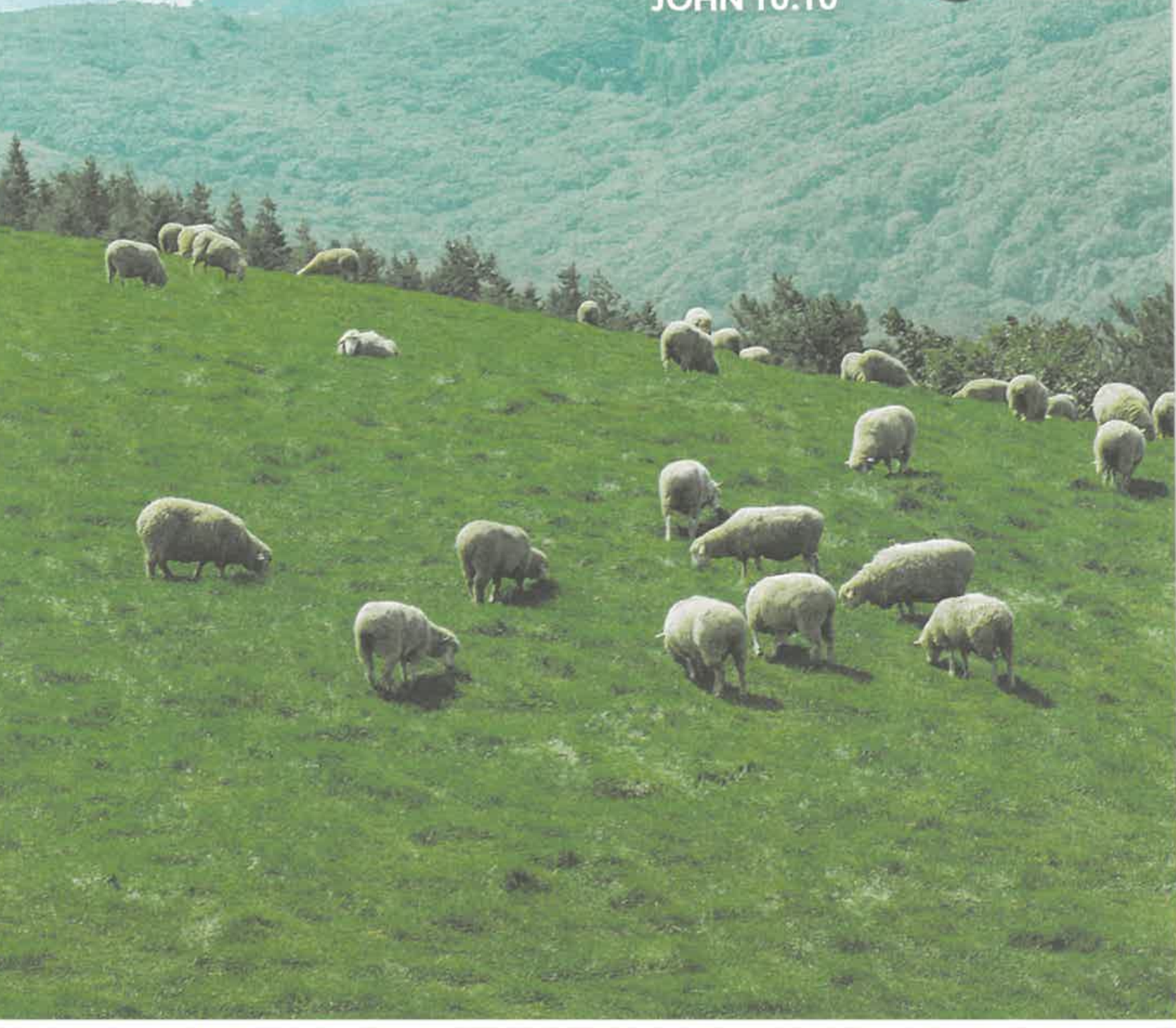


*I came that they may
have life and have it
abundantly*

JOHN 10:10





Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026

the news is...

Matthew 28:1-10

alive in the world

Welcome to people new to this church or faith, long time Lutherans, and Christians and faiths 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 & questioning believers. This is a place where you are welcome to celebrate & sorrow, rejoice & recover. This is a place where lives are made new.

Welcome on this GLORIOUS day!

Please fill out the "Worship Slip" and place it in the offering plate during the offering, as a sign of thanksgiving for all of God's blessings.

Prelude

Gathering

Call to Worship

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

On Good Friday, we thought the good news had been silenced.

On Good Friday, we thought the good news had taken its last breath.

On Good Friday, we thought the good news had been buried.

But today, we know the good news is alive and well.

The good news is dancing!

The good news is on the loose!

The good news is out in the world, calling your name!

Alleluia! Even death has lost its sting.

Let us worship our good-news Christ.

Call to Confession

Friends, on Easter Sunday we remembered
that the world did its worst to God.

The world battered and bruised,
betrayed and abandoned,
crucified and buried our living God.

And despite it all, Jesus *still* chose to return.

Jesus rose again and immediately went to work
spreading God's love to the very people who had hurt him.

So hear me when I say, there is *nothing* you can do
that could keep God's love at bay.

With that good news mind, let us go to God in prayer,
trusting that Jesus Christ loves, claims, and seeks us.

Friends, let us pray:

Prayer of Confession

Gracious God,

we want to be Easter people.

We want to shout your good news from the rooftop.

We want to follow the disciples, who ran to look for you.

**We want to follow the angels, who said, "Be not afraid,"
but sometimes, we are afraid.**

And we don't know where to look.

And we are worried we'll say the wrong thing.

So forgive us, for we are imperfect Easter people.

We are best intentions and best laid plans.

We are an out-of-tune chorus of "alleluias."

We are on our way, but we are not there yet.

Show us how to embody your good news in this world.

Show us how to be your Easter people.

With hope for tomorrow, we pray, Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith,
even when we are an out-of-tune chorus of “Alleluias,”
we belong to God.
Jesus died and rose for you.
And there is nothing that could keep God’s love at bay.
So join me in this good news declaration:

**Through Jesus Christ we are seen, saved, loved, and claimed.
This is the good news of the gospel! Thanks be to God. Amen.**

*Opening Hymn

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing” Red #385

1. Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King;
Let all the earth rejoice and say:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

2. The Lord of life is ris’n this day;
Death’s mighty stone is rolled away;
Let all the earth rejoice and say;
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

3. Praise we in songs of victory
That love, that life which cannot die,
And sing with hearts uplifted high;
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

4. Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
And sing today with one accord,
The life laid down, the life restored;
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Greeting

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen

C: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

P: The grace of our risen Savior, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

*Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray...

C: Amen.

God's Word

God Stories

First Reading Acts 2:24-47 Celebrate pg. 1

Psalm Psalm 23 Choir & Cong. Celebrate pg. 1

Second Reading 1 Peter 2:19-25 Celebrate pg. 2

*Gospel Acclamation "Halle Halle"

Halle, Halle, Halle—lu —u —jah! (repeat twice)

Halle-lujah! Hal-le—lu-jah!

*Gospel Reading John 10:1-10 Celebrate pg. 3

P: The Holy Gospel acc. to St. John, the 10th chapter.

C: Glory to you. O God

(The Gospel is read)

P: The Gospel of our Lord.
C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Message

Pastor James P. Lapp

*Hymn of the Day

“Shepherd Me, O God” Red #780

Refrain:
**Shepherd me, O God,
Beyond my wants,
beyond my fears,
from death into life.**

**God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want,
I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,
I walk by the quiet waters of peace.** (Refrain)

**Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul,
You lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth,
My spirit shall sing the music of your name.** (Refrain)

**Though I should wander the valley of death,
I fear no evil, for you are at my side,
Your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope.** (Refrain)

**You have set me a banquet of love
in the face of hatred,
Crowning me with love beyond my pow’r to hold.** (Refrain)

**Surely your kindness and mercy follow me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore.** (Refrain)

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

* 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.
Please leave worship slip & offering in plates near you.

Music

*Offertory Prayer

P: Giver of life,
C: **We bring to your table what we have,
gifts from you, the one who makes all things new.
With these signs we bring ourselves,
that we may carry to the world
the love of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Invitation to the table

On Easter morning, the women went looking for Jesus.
The angel said he was not in the tomb,
so they ran, afraid yet filled with joy. They sought after him.
They hurried to Galilee, looking for their risen Christ.
And in their seeking, the text tells us:
"Suddenly, Jesus met them" (Matthew 28:9).
Jesus met the women in their seeking.
Jesus met them in their moment of fear and grief.
Jesus met them when they felt lost.
Jesus met them and provided hope.
Friends, if like the women you are seeking Christ,
if you have known grief or fear,
if you have ever felt lost, or if you are in need of some hope,
then come to this Table. All are welcome here.
For just as Jesus met the women in their seeking,
I am confident that Jesus meets us here, saying, "Do not be afraid."

Great Thanksgiving

Risen Christ, good-news God, and ever-present Spirit,
today is a day we've been waiting for.
We've been waiting for the holy mystery of this morning.
We've been waiting for the good news of an empty grave.
We've been waiting for the sound of alleluias.
Today is a day we've been waiting for, and now that we're here,
all we can say is thank you.
Thank you for showing the world what could be.
Thank you for loving us with abandon.
Thank you for facing death and returning with mercy.
Thank you for the empty tomb. Thank you for morning birdsong.
And thank you for meeting us here, as you always do.
Today we celebrate the good news that you are alive in the world.
The grave couldn't hold you. Death couldn't keep you.
The empire couldn't confine you.
Instead, you are here and everywhere.
You are risen. You are on the move in the world.

Your love meets us at this table and calls us out into the world.
And that is *good, good news*.

So on this Sunday of Easter we ask for your help
noticing you in our midst.

When our feet walk beside wildflowers, may we think of you.

When the stars light up the sky, may we see you.

When we break bread with our neighbors, may we feel you.

When a stranger acts with kindness and love,
may we recognize you.

We know that you are out in the world, God,
and we don't want to miss a minute of it.

May God be with you. **And also with you.**

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

P: God, remember us in Your Love and teach us to pray:

**C: Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is 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 (gluten-free) into either the wine (red) or grape juice (white).

Hymn *“You Satisfy the Hungry Heart”* Red #484

REFRAIN: You satisfy the hungry heart
 with gift of finest wheat.
 Come give to us, O saving Lord,
 the bread of life to eat.

**As when the shepherd calls his sheep,
They know and heed his voice;
So when you call your fam’ly, Lord,
We follow and rejoice. REFRAIN**

**With joyful lips we sing to you
Our praise and gratitude
That you should count us worthy, Lord,
To share this heav’nly food. REFRAIN**

**Is not the cup we bless and share
The blood of Christ out-poured?
Do not one cup, one loaf, declare
Our oneness in the Lord? REFRAIN**

**The myst’ry of your presence, Lord,
No mortal tongue can tell:
Whom all the world cannot contain
Comes in our hearts to dwell. REFRAIN**

**You give yourself to us, O Lord;
Then selfless let us be,
To serve each other In your name
In truth and charity. REFRAIN**

*Communion Blessing

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

*Prayer After Communion

Loving Christ,
thank you for the bread that nourishes our bodies.
Thank you for the cup that quenches our thirst.
Thank you for this community,
which reminds us who we are.
Thank you for this Table that brings us together.
Thank you for the music that lifts our spirits.
Thank you for the promise that at this Table,
and every table, you will be there.
May this holy meal nourish us to go out into the world
speaking of your good, good news.
With joy and hope we pray, **Amen.**

The Sending

*Blessing

May God bless you and keep you.
May God's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
May God look upon you with favor,
And give you peace.
Amen.

*Closing Hymn

Guide My Feet Blue #987

Guide my feet while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

Guide my feet while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

**Guide my feet while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

Hold my hand while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

Hold my hand while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

**Hold my hand while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

Stand by me while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

Stand by me while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

**Stand by me while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

I'm your child while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

I'm your child while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

**I'm your child while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

Search my heart while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

Search my heart while I run this race.

Yes, my Lord!

**Search my heart while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain.**

*Dismissal

P: Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!

C: Christ Is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

P: Go in Peace. Share the Good News.

C: Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Postlude



Serving Today

Altar Guild -

Reader— Janet Slay

Office support—Candace A., Sheila B. & Sherilyn J.

Prayer Concerns

SHORT TERM *Bob Zigler, Alfrad family, Ratliff family, Kathybelle, Taiyo, Sam, Nancy's Family, Kat, Penny, Kathy Freeman, Family of Pr. Herb Schmidt, Kathybelle & family, Colin, Family of Marc Northcott, Camryn, Corbin, Family of Marilyn, Dorothy Ronning, Bob Holzwarth, Mary Robe & Family, Renee, Family of Laura Gates, Sina & Bella, Chad Fields, Beth Stiles, Laura & twin babies, James, Don, Pr. Gary & Corinne Stevenson, Kevin, Liz, Sam, Tom Williams, Kathy M., Nancy, Grey, Levi, James, Galahad, Debbie, Sam, Nate Barker, Robbin, 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, Katarina.*

LONG TERM ¹³*Those suffering with Mental Illness, James Sheehan, Biergiel—Colclough family, Eric Utto-Galarneau, Beth*



Mt. Cross Memorial Day Volunteer Event

Saturday, May 23

Come for all day or partial day. Plenty of jobs for all skill levels. Fellowship with cool people. End with community celebration BBQ & Bingo!

They need a head count, so register now
See www.mtcross.org *Events*
You may be amused by the photo used

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>



Upcoming Events:

April Benevolence Offering = Habitat for Humanity

- April 28 Scouts 6:00 pm
- April 29 Newsletter Collating 2:00 pm
- April 29 Bible Study 7:30 pm
- April 30 Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm
- May 1 A. A. Group 7:00 pm
- May 7 Women's Bold Café 6:00 pm
devotions and potluck
- May 9 Embroiders Guild 9—4:00 pm
- May 16 AFC Annual Gala 6:00—8:30 pm Holy Cross
info@afcsantacruz.org
- May 17 Meet Pastor Larry our sabbatical Pastor
- May 20 TAIZE Worship 7:00 pm
- May 21—August 24 Pastor Jim on sabbatical
- May 23 Mt. Cross Memorial Day Volunteer Event
- May 30 AFC Shelter Dinner. We are committed to the
5th Saturday of each month. Please sign up to help
serve the meal, and/or provide main course, or salad. St.
John's, Aptos 6 pm. We are all worthy of dignity & connection.
- June 7 SAVE THE DATE
Meet the Mt. Cross Summer Staff & BBQ

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 Statement

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.—Fri. 12-5:00 pm

Ministers: The People of St. Stephen's
Pastor: Rev. James P. Lapp
Church Administrator: Leslie Lapp
Music Directors: Gary Roberts
Sunday School: Leslie Lapp
Pre-School Director: Kathy Berens
Custodian: John Hopping

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