



The
kingdom
of heaven
is like a
merchant
in search
of fine pearls

MATTHEW 13:45

9th Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026

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.

Please fill out the “Worship Slip” and place it in the offering plate.

(*) Asterisk means, “Please stand as you are able.”

Music Music from the Four Prayers I Tone.
R. Purvis for the Pianoforte

The Gathering

*Confession and Forgiveness

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign
marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

C: Amen.

P: Seeking reconciliation with God and neighbor,
let us remember the gift of baptism and confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: God of mercy

**C: We confess that we have sinned against you,
Against one another,
And against the earth entrusted to our care.
We are worried and distracted by many things,
And we fail to love you above all else.
We store up treasures for ourselves
And turn away from our neighbors in need.
Forgive us,
that we may live in the freedom of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

P: When we were laid low by sin and the world's evil,
God made us alive together with Christ,
Forgiving us + all our trespasses
By taking the sin of the world to the cross.
For freedom Christ has set us free:
Rejoice in this good news!

C: 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!

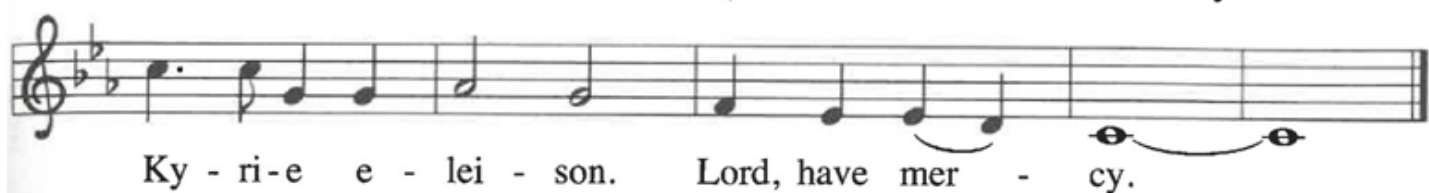
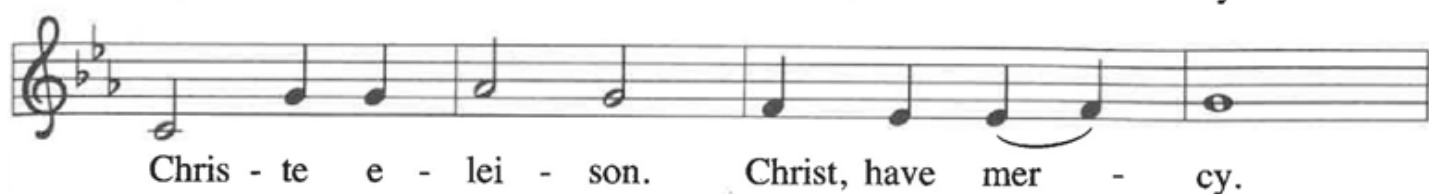
*Greeting

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

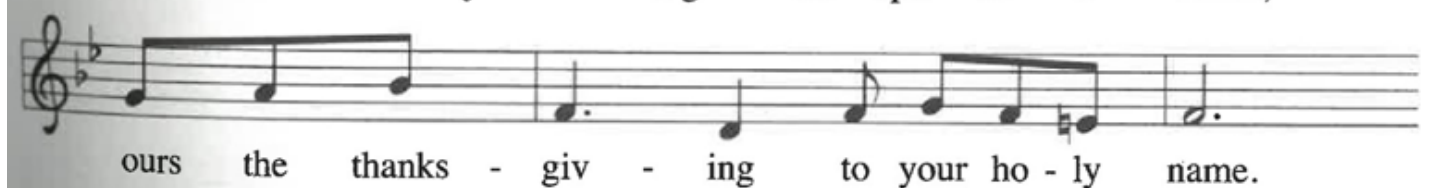
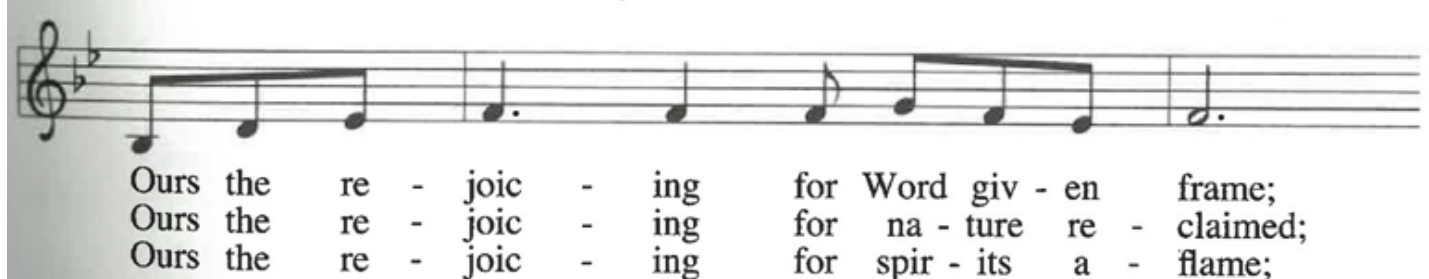
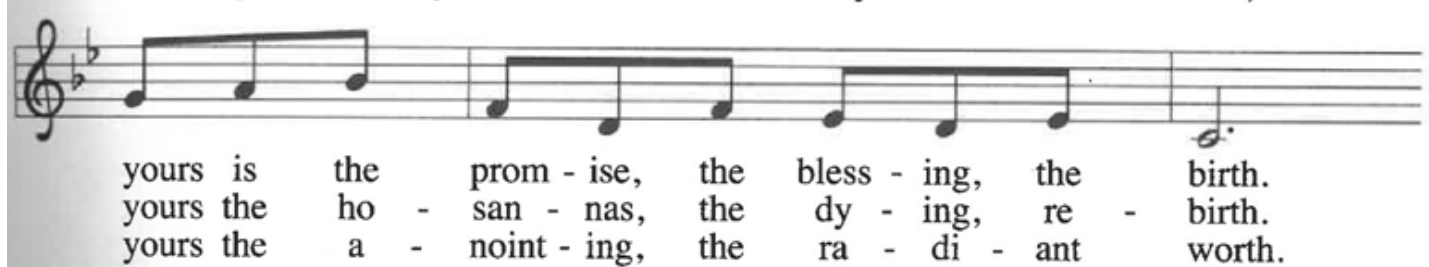
C: And also with you

*Kyrie & Hymn of Praise

Blue #31



One of the following or another song of praise may be sung.



*Prayer of the Day

The Word of God

God Stories - How has God's Word come alive in your life?

First Reading

1 Kings 3:5-12

Celebrate pg. 1

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 119:129-136 (read responsively)

Cel. pg. 2

Second Reading

Romans 8:26-39

Celebrate pg. 3

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

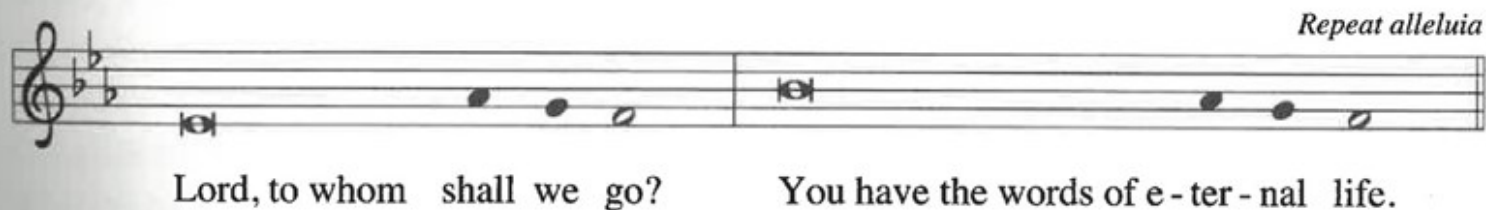
C: Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Acclamation

Blue #33



The proper verse may be sung, or all may sing one of these verses.



*Gospel Reading

Mathew 13:31-33, 44-52 Cel. pg. 3

P: The Holy Gospel acc. to St. Matthew, the 13th Chapter

C: Glory to you. O God.

(The Gospel is read)

P: This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

Message

Pr. Larry Vilardo

*Hymn of the Day

“Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song” Red 403

Like the murmur of the dove's song
Like the challenge of her flight
Like the vigor of the wind's rush
Like the new flame's eager might
Come, Holy Spirit, come

To the members of Christ's body
To the branches of the vine
To the church in faith assembled
To our midst as gift and sign
Come, Holy Spirit, come

With the healing of division
With the ceaseless voice of prayer
With the pow'r to love and witness
With the peace beyond compare
Come, Holy Spirit, come

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 Music for the Parable of the Sower,
 for the Gospel of Matthew

Offering Prayer

P: Blessed are you, O God,
For the greening earth given for all,
For the talents we are given to share,
And for this bread and fruit of the vine.
Transform us to be the body of Christ,
That, feasting on this food and drink,
Our lives may reflect your generosity;
Through Christ our Lord,

C: **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 God thanks and praise.

*Eucharistic Prayer

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our JOY,
that we should at all times and in all places,
offer thanks and praise to you,
almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection,
You pour out your Holy Spirit,
Uniting in one body,
people of every tongue and nation.

*Words of Institution

In the night, in which he was betrayed,
Our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, broke it,
And gave it to his disciples saying:

“Take and eat. This is my body given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

And gave it for all to drink, saying:

“this cup is the new covenant in by blood, shed for you

And for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.”

*Lord's Prayer

P: God, remember us in you 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 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**

P: God invites you to this table of bounty.
Come, the banquet is ready.

(Please be seated)

Communion Gathering Song



Communion Hymn

“Now the Feast and Celebration” 167 Red

REFRAIN

Now the feast and celebration,
all of creation sings for joy
To the God of life and love and freedom;
Praise and glory forevermore!

Now is the feat of he Lamb once slain,
whose blood has freed and united us
to be one great people of God

REFRAIN

Power and riches, wisdom and might,
All honor and glory to Christ
Forever.

REFRAIN

For God has come to dwell with us
To make us people of God;
To make all things new.

REFRAIN

The Sending

*Prayer after Communion

P: O God, in this Holy Communion
You have welcomed us into your presence,
Nourished us with words of mercy,
And fed us at your table.
Amid the cares of this life,
Strengthen us to love you with all our heart,
Serve our neighbors with a willing spirit,
And honor the earth you have made;
Through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

*Blessing

P: Live your lives in Christ,
rooted and built up in God's Spirit.
May you abound in thanksgiving;
And may the blessing of the holy Trinity, + one God,
Be upon you and remain with you forever.

C: Amen

*Closing Hymn

“Savior, Again to Your Dear Name” Red 534

Savior, again to your dear name we raise
With one accord our parting hymn of praise;
Once more we bless you ere our worship cease,
Then, lowly bending, wait your word of peace.

Grant us your peace upon our homeward way;
With you began, with you shall end the day;
Guard all the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,
That in this house have called upon your name.

Grant us your peace, Lord through the coming night;
For us transform its darkness into light.
Keep us from harm and danger till the dawn;
Your evening presence promise to your own.

Grant us your peace throughout our earthly life,
Our balm in sorrow, and our stay in strife:
Then, when your voice shall bid our conflict cease,
Call us, O Lord, to your eternal peace

*Dismissal

P: Go in Peace, Christ is sending you.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Music “Variation III” from Grand Choeur
 Molto Maestoso—Richard Purvis

Serving Today

Reader: Steven Hendrickson

Coffee Host: Bill & Margaret Schraft

Altar Guild: Tina Gates

Office Support: Sheila Buswell & Sherilyn Jager



New Ways of Giving

Our *Virtual Offering Plate* has been enhanced. Donations can be made by: credit card, debit card, PayPal, Venmo and Zelle.

- 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>

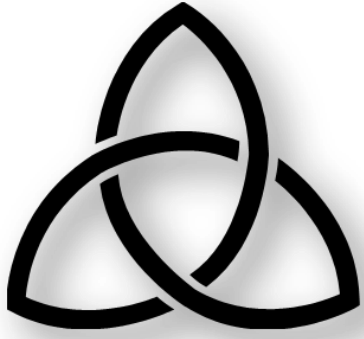




Prayer Concerns

SHORT TERM *Mark Linder, Priscila Sanchez, Allyson Wright, Stefan Laughling & Lisa family, Jan Dun, Felix Rodriguex, Larry Robinson & family, Deontae Ratliff, Kayla Ratlif, Barbara Allen, Jordan Perez, Yvonne Lowery, Lydia, Fred, Rev. Will & Dorothy Sieburg, Pam Huypner, Karin Zaun & family, Bob Zigler, Kathybelle, Taiyo, Sam, Nancy's Family, Kat, Penny, Kathy Freeman, Colin, Camryn, Dorothy Ronning, Bob Holzwarth, Mary Robe & Family, Sina & Bella, Chad Fields, James, Don, Pr. Gary & Corinne Stevenson, Kevin, Liz, Sam, 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, Gary & Marjie Toops, Rachel B., Anne & Chloe Johnston, Isaac & Marissa, Mateo & Lina, Atlas, Katarina. Lorraine & Pr. Larry*

LONG TERM *James, 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., Those suffering with Mental Illness, Immigrant families, The Unhoused, 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.*



Trinity Tuesday

(Pub Theology / Discussion)

One Beverage ~ One Hour ~ One Question

Tuesday August 4 at 6:30pm

First Tuesday of the month at Discretion Brewery

*BRING YOUR DEEPEST QUESTIONS,
AN OPEN HEART,
& A CURIOUS MIND*

Gather with us for an evening of meaningful conversation and real community. Bring your questions about faith, life, and everything in between. No judgment, no limits—just authentic dialogue over a cold one.

Whether you've been with us from the start or you're stepping through the door for the first time, there's a seat waiting for you.

Past conversations: How do we see God? How are we called? Why do bad things happen to good people? Recognizing our God-given talents. How do we forgive?

Kathy Allen 430-6359 for more info.



On ZOOM
with Pr. Larry

Check email on
Tues. for link

WEDNESDAYS

7:30 – 8:30 pm

We will be looking at the upcoming scripture readings for Sunday, to enrich our worship experience and uncover some of the deeper truths of our faith. As we grow in our faith, we grow in community.

Larry Vilardo <lvilardo@earthlink.net>

Host AFC Shelter Dinner

August 29 5:45—7:15 pm

St. John's - 125 Canterbury Dr, Aptos



Sign up NOW. Come offer your resources to our neighbors without housing. Along the way, we find a deeper understanding that we are all worthy of dignity and connection. You can assist those without homes to a better life.

AFC has been sponsoring a nightly transitional shelter for 15 participants at faith communities from Santa Cruz to Aptos. St. Stephen's has committed to dinners months with 5 Saturdays. more info 476-4700



Greetings! My vision is to recruit talented church members who are interested in music used in worship and love to praise God, as I do.

Let's celebrate, and enhance our weekly singing, playing, praying together, here in our God centered / worship gatherings. Won't you take a moment and speak to yourself and see if this is good for you and others. Relax, pray, and say yes!

Be a leader in these four instrumental parts to an orchestra—find (1 player each) and build a team:

Strings Wood Brass Percussion

I will work with you also. You will not be a lone contact person.

Support team:

Posters, artwork etc.

Pre-recorded music, listen & order

Website, communications etc.

Yours in Christ and Mission,
Gary



Upcoming Events:

July Benevolence Offering = ELCA World Hunger

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| July 28 | Scouts 6:00 pm |
| July 29 | Bible Study Zoon 7:30 pm |
| July 30 | Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm |
| July 31 | A. A. Group 7:00 pm |
| July 26 | Coffee Host needed |
| July 30 | NL Collating 10:30 am Help needed |
| Aug. 4 | Trinity Tuesday 6:30 pm
Discretion Brewry 41st Ave.
Faith Questions genuine community |
| Aug. 6 & 20 | Women's Bold Café 6:00pm
devotions and potluck |
| Aug. 9 | Back to School Blessing
Students, Parents & Educators |
| Aug. 9—30 | Coffee Hosts & readers needed |
| Aug. 23 | Farewell Potluck for Pastor Larry |
| Aug. 29 | Host AFC Shelter Dinner St. John's, Aptos 6 p
Sign up for one item |
| Aug. 30 | "Holy Closure" worship honoring our preschool |

Pr. Larry will have brief office hours Tues. & Weds. Afternoons

Now through August 24 Pastor Jim on sabbatical

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.—Fri. Noon—5:00 pm

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

Music used by permission Onelicense #A-706539