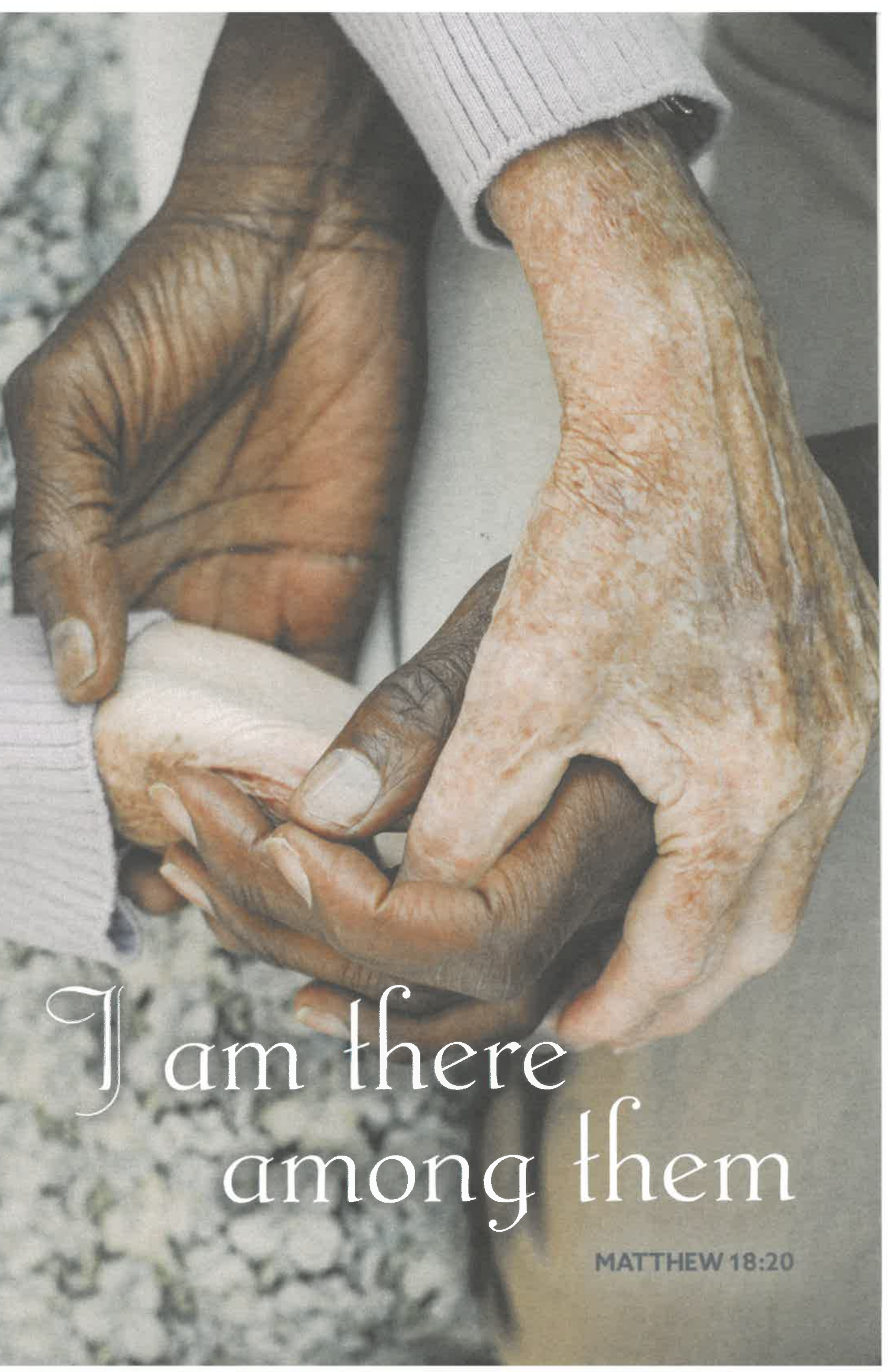




I am there
among them

MATTHEW 18:20

15th Sunday after Pentecost

September 6, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Music “Konzert in F” by G.F. Handel

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.”

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 pours love into our hearts
and healing upon the earth.

C: **Amen.**

P: Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate God,

**C: we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness
In the world and in our own hearts.**

Creation groans from overuse.

Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships.

Indifference keeps us from seeking justice.

Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love

To others.

Turn our hearts back to you.

Restore our world and reconcile us to one another.

Renew us to live as your holy people,

Following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

P: Hear this good news:

We have peace with God through + Jesus Christ,

In whom there is no condemnation,

But only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

C: Amen.

*Opening Hymn

“Earth and All Stars!” Red #731

Earth and all stars! Loud rushing planets!

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Hail, wind, and rain! Loud blowing snow storm!

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain

God has done marvelous things.

I too sing praises with a new song!

Trumpet and pipes! Loud clashing cymbals!

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Harp, lute, and lyre! Loud humming cellos!

Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

(continued)

Engines and steel! Loud pounding hammers!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Limestone and beams! Loud building workers!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

Classrooms and labs! Loud boiling test tubes!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Athlete and band! Loud cheering people!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

Knowledge and truth! Loud sounding wisdom!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Daughter and son! Loud praying members!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

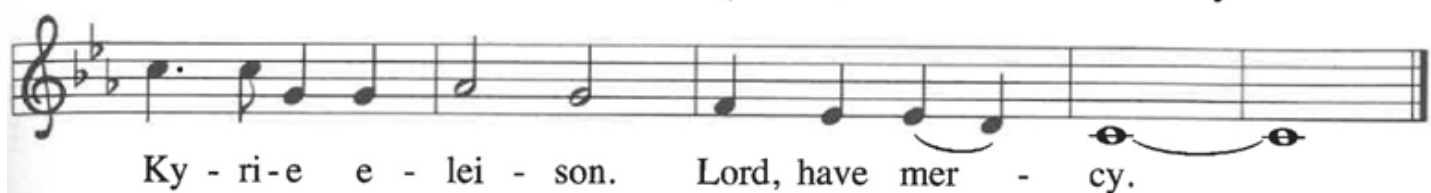
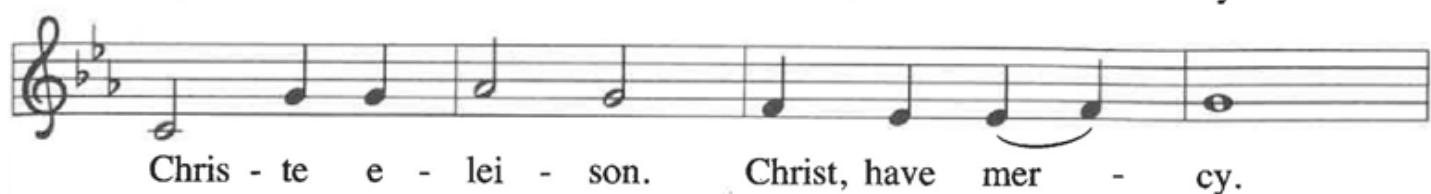
*Greeting

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

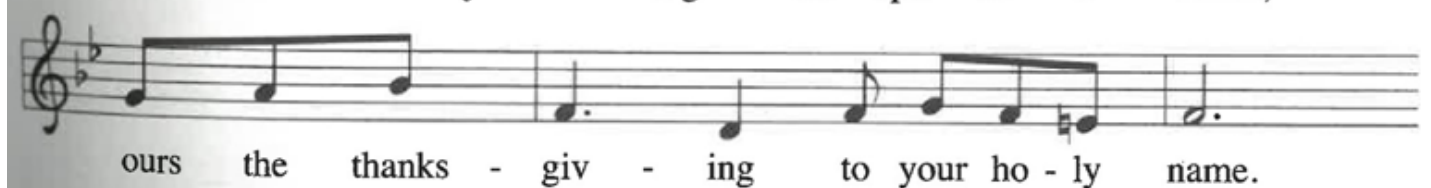
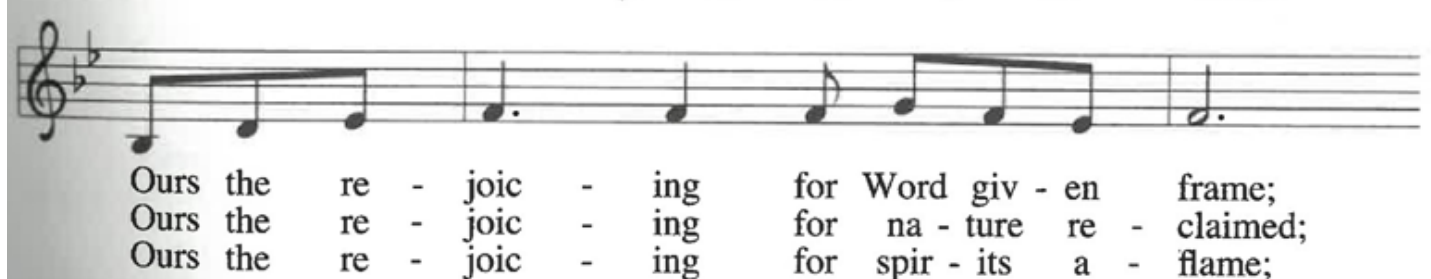
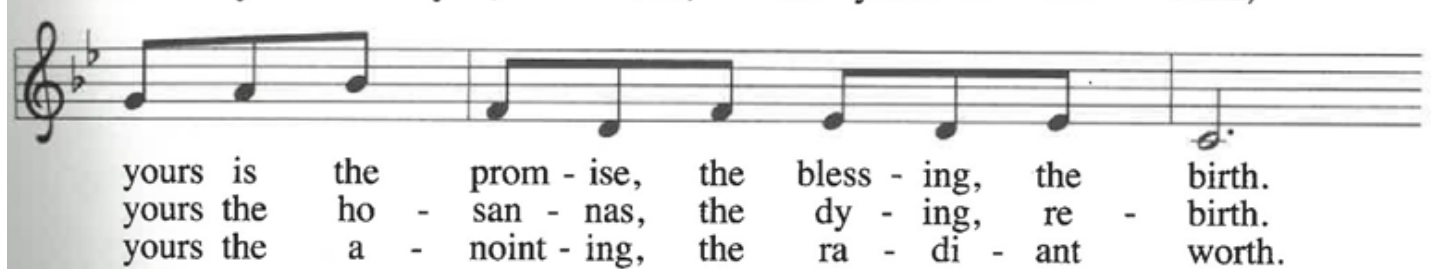
C: And also with you

*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

Ezekiel 33:7-11

Celebrate pg. 1

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 119:33-40 (read responsively)

Cel. pg. 2

Second Reading

Romans 13:8-14

Celebrate pg. 3

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

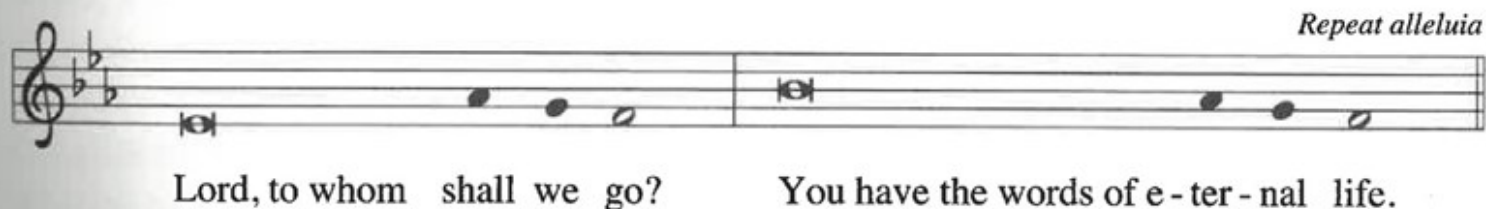
C: Thanks be to God.

*Gospel Acclamation

Blue #33



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



*Gospel Reading

Mathew 18:8-14 Celebrate pg. 3

P: The Holy Gospel acc. to St. Matthew, the 18th 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. James P. Lapp

*Hymn of the Day

“As We Gather at Your Table” Red #522

As we gather at your table,
as we listen to your word,
Help us know, O God, your presence;
let our hearts and minds be stirred.
Nourish us with sacred story
till we claim it as our own;
Teach us through this holy banquet
how to make Love's vict'ry known.

Turn our worship into witness
in the sacrament of life;
Send us forth to love and serve you
bringing peace where there is strife.
Give us, Christ, your great compassion
to forgive as you forgave;
May we still behold your image
in the world you died to save.

(hymn continued)

Gracious Spirit, help us summon
other guests to share that feast
Where triumphant Love will welcome
those who had been last and least.
There no more will envy blind us
nor will pride our peace destroy,
As we join with saints and angels
to repeat the sounding joy.

The Prayers of the Church

Celebrate, Page 4

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 from Grace Cathedral, Richard Purvis

Offering Prayer

P: God of creation,
You send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly.
All blessings are from you;
make us generous with what we have.
Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts
in service to you and in love to our neighbors,
today and always.

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...

*Words of Institution

*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.**

*Invitation to Communion

P: Christ invites you to this table.
All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

(Please be seated)

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Communion Hymn

“Christ Our Peace” Blue ACS #1037

Christ, our peace,
you break down the walls that divide us;
Christ, our peace, come, make us one body in you.

The Sending

Prayer after Communion

P: Sustaining God, with this bread and cup,
you nourish us with mercy and abundant life.
By your spirit, send us from this table to a needy world.
Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love,
following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

C: Amen

*Blessing

P: The God of love
draw you into full accord and one mind
in the body of Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

P: The God of hope
grant you strength and joy in all circumstances
through the interceding of the Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: The God of grace
+ bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

*Closing Hymn

“Earth and All Stars!” Red #731

Earth and all stars! Loud rushing planets!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Hail, wind, and rain! Loud blowing snow storm!
Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain

God has done marvelous things.
I too sing praises with a new song!

Trumpet and pipes! Loud clashing cymbals!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Harp, lute, and lyre! Loud humming cellos!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

Engines and steel! Loud pounding hammers!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Limestone and beams! Loud building workers!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

Classrooms and labs! Loud boiling test tubes!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Athlete and band! Loud cheering people!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

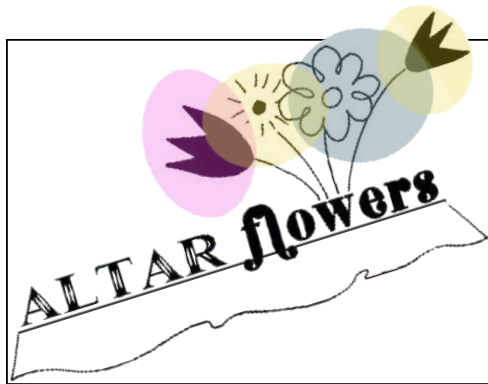
Knowledge and truth! Loud sounding wisdom!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Daughter and son! Loud praying members!
Sing to the Lord a new song! *Refrain*

*Dismissal

P: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Music Konzert in G Moll by G.F. Handel



given by Sheila Buswell
In honor of
Their anniversary

Serving Today

Reader:

Coffee Host: Shelly Barker

Altar Guild: Candace Anderson

Office Support: Sheila Buswell & Sherilyn Jager

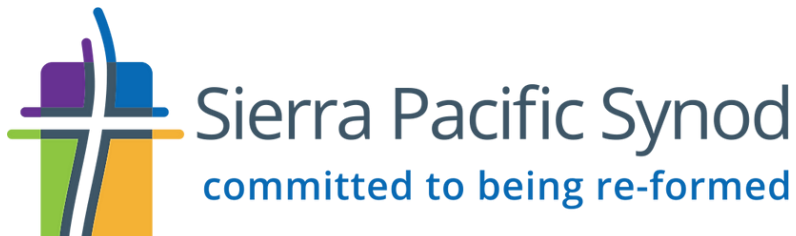


Sister Parish Sunday Sept. 13 10 am

Presentation during worship & TBD Pupusa Lunch

Santa Cruz al Salvador connects Monterey Bay Area faith communities with communities in El Salvador, enhancing and enriching the lives of all participants. This mission is guided by the philosophy of accompaniment — walking together in a solidarity resulting in interdependence and mutual respect.

“Building relationships for better lives”: What does this mean? We were often asked “What do you do when you go to El Salvador?” and “Do you build homes or schools or churches?” Without construction skills, the founders focused on another approach. If we build *relationships* between the visitors and the visited, it just might improve the lives of both.



Women of the ELCA Retreat

"I am Worthy"
September 11–13, 2026

San Damiano Retreat Ctr. in Danville

Join in for a special Taizé service and inspiring leadership from Rev. Sara Wilson, Rev. Sarah Street, Regina Banks, JD, and Rev. Katy Grindberg, Sunday worship presider.

The retreat is \$185 and includes lodging (double occupancy), six meals, and all program events. Day-only registration options are also available. spselca.org

Circle of Promise

Bake Sale & Boutique
Sunday September 20th!!

This is your opportunity to prepare for holiday entertaining and gift giving. Craft makers, Bakers, Jam and Jelly makers are encouraged to prepare items over the summer to contribute. Sale proceeds will go to the Kitchen Renovation fund.

Circle of Promise meetings are the second Thursday of the month beginning **September 10th**, at **10:30** in the Fireside room

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.

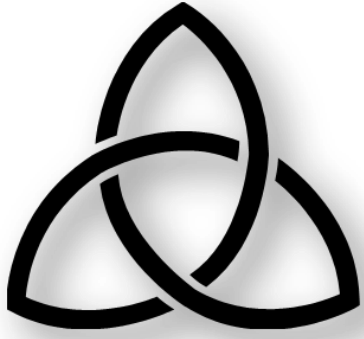
All are available at
<https://ststephenslutheran.org>
Or by scanning this QR code.



Prayer Concerns

SHORT TERM Dorothy Ronning, Mark Linder, Ross Johnston, Doug Yaryan, Uncle Jim, Paula Pierce, Cathy Pezer, Bill McBride, Lew, Tina Broudin, Rob, Debbie Greso, James White, Ryan Sharon, Stetson, Raleigh, Cheryl Crutch, Doris Crutch, Eleara Sanchez, Jeffery, Zaun family, Doug Lentz, Barbara Allen & Family, Jordan Perez, Fred, Rev. Will & Dorothy Sieburg, Pam Huypner, Bob Zigler, Kathybelle, Taiyo, Kat, Sina & Bella, Chad Fields, James, Don, Kevin, Liz, Sam, Kathy M., Nancy, Grey, Levi, James, Galahad, Debbie, Sam, Nate Barker, 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, 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 October 6 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. Jim

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.

Sign up for Altar Flowers September & November
Dedicate to loved ones

Coffee Host:

Sept. 27

Oct. 5 & 12

Volunteers
Needed



Host AFC Shelter Dinner: Oct. 31
sign up for one item
St. John's, Aptos 6 pm

Upcoming Events:

September Benevolence Offering =
Lutheran Campus Ministry (revised)

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Sept. 8 | Scouts 6:00 pm |
| Sept. 9 | Bible Study Zoom 7:30 pm |
| Sept 10 | Circle of Promise 10:30 am |
| Sept. 10 | Men's A.A. Group 7:00 pm |
| Sept. 11 | New musical group to use the Fellowship hall Fridays 11-1 "Next Stage Productions" |
| Sept. 11 | A. A. Group 7:00 pm |
| Sept 11-13 | SPS Women of ELCA Retreat — Danville
Christa is going, anyone else? |
| Sept 12 | Embroider's Guild 10—4 |
| Sept. 13 | El Salvador Sunday — presentation 10 am
Pupusa Lunch TBD |
| Sept. 17 | Women's Bold Café 6:00pm
devotions and potluck |
| Sept. 20 | Circle of Promise Boutique & Bake Sale |
| Sept. 27 | Guest music during worship (Next Stage Prod.) |
| Oct. 4 | Blessing of the Animals 10 am |
| Oct. 31 | Host AFC Shelter Dinner St. John's, Aptos 6 p |

Pastor's Office Hours Wed & Thurs. 10:00 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
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
Sunday School: Leslie Lapp
Custodian: John Hopping
Powerpoint: Jay Johnston, Kent Madsen & Barbara Rice

Music used by permission Onelicense #A-706539