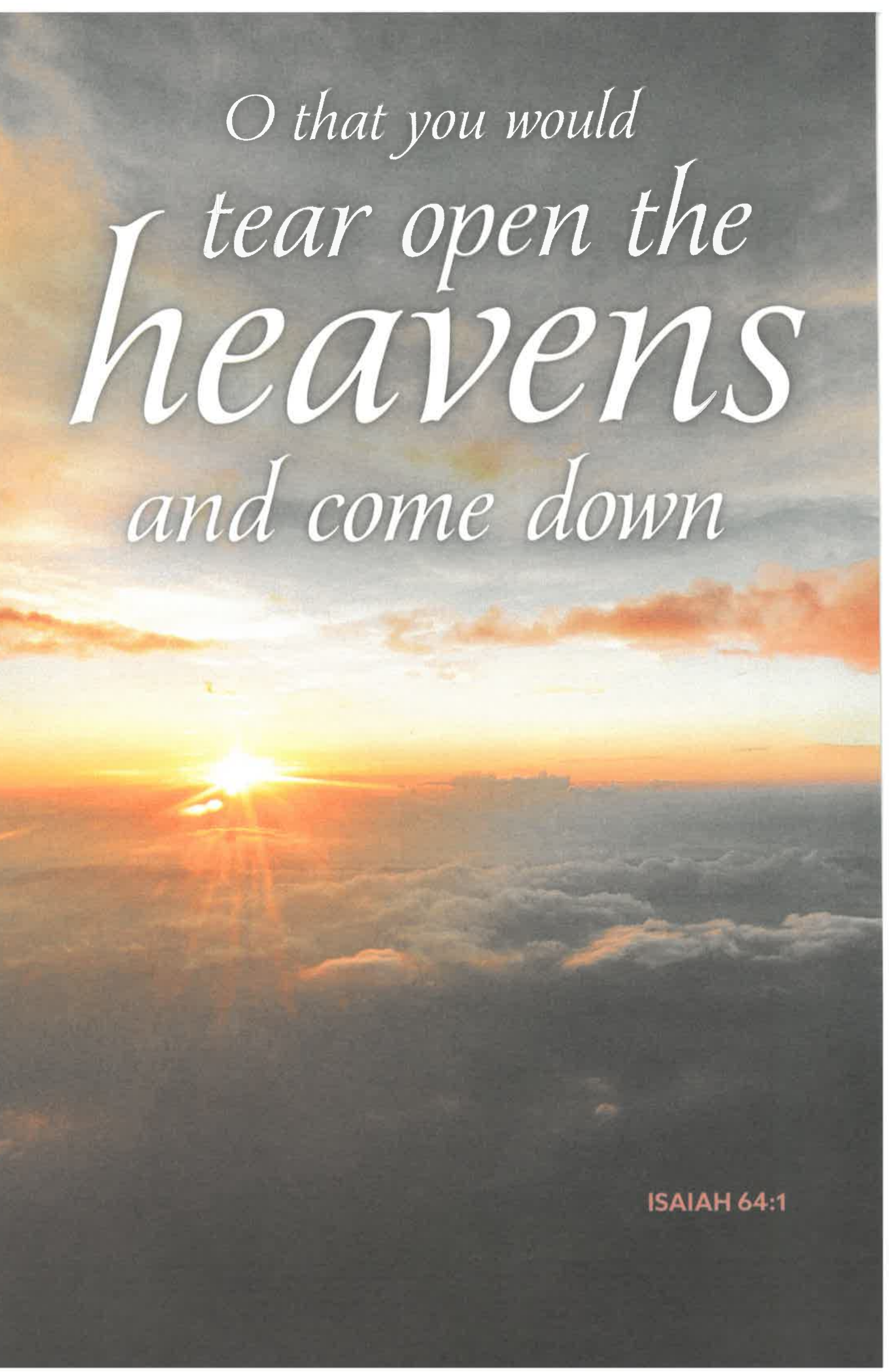

O that you would
tear open the
heavens
and come down
ISAIAH 64:1

1st Sunday in Advent

November 29, 2026 10:00 a.m.

Music "Creator of the Stars of Night"
Latin hymn, Planeson

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

Until the Dawn
ACTIONS FOR THE WORK OF ADVENT

CALL TO WORSHIP

In God's house,
we are free to wear our hearts on our sleeves.
In God's house,
we may come exactly as we are.
In God's house,
we dare to hope. We dream new dreams.
We cry out. We call upon God.
In God's house,

all are welcome and all are heard.
So come and worship.
God is here. God is listening.
Let us worship our with-us God.

CANDLE LIGHTING | HOPE

When the nights are long
and the roads are hard,
we turn our eyes to the stars.
When the work is demanding
and injustice unending,
we stand together, arm in arm.
When fear looms large
and grief weighs heavy,
we cry out to God without holding back.
And when the dawn of tomorrow
feels far away,
we gather together to light the Candle of Hope.

(Light candle)

Like the stars above,
may this light shine bright.
May it guide our path.
May it inspire deeper hope.
Until God's promised day,
may it be so. **Amen.**

CALL TO CONFESSION

In scripture, we see people cry out to God
with honesty and authenticity.
The Psalmists pray, "How long, O God?"

They beg, “Come and save us,”
and “Let your face shine upon us.”
From their raw honesty, we know that we can go to God
with just as much honesty about
the truth of our lives and the state of our world.
So join me in the Prayer of Confession.
Join me in this moment of truth-telling.
Just as the Psalmists did,
let us go to God in prayer. Let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God,
we have been known—
to bite our tongues,
to work through a broken heart,
to don our favorite rose-colored glasses.
We have been known—
to look for the bright side,
to sweep the pain under the rug,
to choose ignorance for the benefit of bliss.
We have been known to keep the hurt
in our heart to ourselves.
Forgive us for filtering our honesty.
Forgive us for ignoring the power of lament.
Forgive us for not turning to you first.
Remind us that you are a God who listens
and you are a God who restores.
With open hearts, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith,

whether you pray like the Psalmists—raw & unfiltered—
or you can't remember the last time
you were honest with God,
God still loves you. God sees you.
And God longs to be in relationship.
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:
There is nothing we could do or say
that will keep God's love from being showered upon us.
We are seen, forgiven, and invited—
into deeper honesty and deeper relationship
with God and with each other.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

*Opening Hymn *"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"*
Red #240

Light one candle to watch for Messiah;
Let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.

Light two candles to watch for Messiah;
Let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
Gently lead them homeward.

Light three candles to watch for Messiah;
Let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
For the King of glory.

Light four candles to watch for Messiah;
Let the light banish darkness.
He is coming, tell the glad tidings.
Let your lights be shining!

*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.

*Prayer of the Day

P: May God be with you.
C: And also with you.
P: Let us pray...

The Word of God

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

First Reading Isaiah 64:1-9 Celebrate pg. 1

R: Word of God, Word of Life.
C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm Psalm 80 -Choir with cong. response Cel. pg. 2

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Celebrate pg. 3

R: Word of God, Word of Life.
C: **Thanks be to God.**

(Please stand in body or spirit)

P: The Holy Gospel acc. to St. Mark 13th Chapter.
C: **Glory to You, O God.**

*Gospel Reading Mark 13:24-37 Celebrate pg. 3

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

Sermon Rev. James P. Lapp

Hymn of the Day

"Awake , Awake, and Greet the New Morn" Red #242

1. Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
behold! The Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
he opens wide the heav'nly door
and lives now inside us forever.

2. To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes asinging,
his humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing;
music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of his anthems roll
to shatter all hatred and blindness.

3 In darkest night his coming shall be
when all the world is despairing,
as morning light so quiet and free,
so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song,
the lame shall leap in wonder,
the weak be raised above the strong,
and weapons be broken asunder.

4. Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though dark the winder and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer
and love our endless story;
may God fill ev'ry day we share
and bring us at last into glory.

*An Affirmation of Faith

We believe
even on the longest nights—
when our steps are unclear and fear takes hold—
that the sun is still rising.
We believe in that sunrise
like we believe in God's promised day.
So instead of giving in to the great unknown,
we move, in spirit, toward that light.
We summon our courage.
We carry each other.
We dance under the stars.
We listen for the angels.
And we believe the good news of the gospel,
which says that God loves God's creation so fiercely
that God took on flesh to be with us.
This is the truth that sustains our journey.
In this, we believe.

*PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God who holds us, who hears us,
who knows the rhythms of our heartbeats
and the ache of our prayers—we unfurl before you.
We stretch out our weary hearts.
We lay bare the truth of our lives.
We come to you in prayer.
It should be easy to cry out to you, God,
for the prophets all did it.
Isaiah said, "O that you would tear open the heavens
and Come Down!"

We hear these words brimming with honesty
and we are reminded
that there is nothing we cannot bring to you.
We are reminded that, like Isaiah,
we can bring our full emotions to you.
Surely there is no plea, no ache, no grief, no joy,
no riddle, no wondering, no curiosity
that we cannot name and lift up.
What a gift that is.
So now, Holy One, we lean on this truth as we pray together.

(Please offer a petition out loud from the back of the Celebrate)

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 "My House" (Build My House) musical adaptation of Jim Barrie's Peter Pan. Lyrics & Music - Leonard Bernstein Sung by Gretchen Retka

Offering Prayer

P: Let us Pray...
Eternal God,
Our time, talents, and treasures are gifts from you.
Receive what we offer and all that you entrust to us,
Until hunger is no more and all the world is fed,
Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

*GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

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.

God of every tomorrow,
God of the stars above us,
God of the sunrise before us,
we gather at your Table today.
We gather here, hungry for a better tomorrow.
We gather here, hungry for your promised day.
We gather here, hungry for a glimpse of your Spirit.

So today we pray, meet us in this holy moment.
Meet us in this ordinary bread and cup.
Meet us as we sing, and pray, and feed one another.
Meet us here, that we might be fueled for the journey ahead,
for we know that there is work yet to do.
We know there is joy to seize, courage to summon,
words to speak, songs to sing, and people to love.

So until the dawn rises—until your holy tomorrow,
we will gather at your Table
to fuel ourselves for this holy work of Advent.
As we do, we will continue to thank you
for the stars that guide us,
for the community that surrounds us,
for the dreams that sustain us,
for the Spirit that holds us,
and for the bread and cup that nourish us.
What a gift it is to gather at your Table!

*Words of Institution

*Lord's Prayer

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 THE TABLE

Advent is a season of waiting.
We wait for the birth of the Messiah.
We wait for God's promised day.
We wait for the sun to rise on a morning when
swords will be beaten into plowshares
and spears will be turned into pruning hooks.
But our waiting is not passive.
While we wait, we will gather at this Table.
While we wait, we will break bread, tell stories,
and remember who we are and who we belong to.
So, church, come to this table.
Come and be nourished for the journey ahead.
For just as surely as the sun will rise,
God will always meet us here.
All are welcome.

(You may be seated)

Holy Communion

Guests: You are welcome to come forward to receive Communion as part of this church family! Children are welcome to come forward and receive a special blessing if they have never communed before. Communion is by intinction, which means that we dip the bread into either the wine (red) or grape juice (white). If you need gluten-free bread, please indicate that to the pastor. You will receive an individually wrapped gluten-free wafer to open yourself and dip into the cup. All are truly welcome!

Communion Hymn

"We Are Waiting for Jesus" ACS #905

We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.
We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.
Sun of justice, shine upon us;
We are trusting in your promise.
We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.

We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.
We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.
Loving Shepherd, walk beside us;
Stir our hearts, and gently guide us.
We are waiting for Jesus; Jesus brings peace.

The Sending

*Communion Blessing

P: May this Holy Communion of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.
C: **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy One, until the dawn, until your promised day,
until the sun rises on a world
that finally knows peace and harmony,
until all people know their love and worth,
until that day, until that dawn, until that holy tomorrow,
we will gather at this Table.
We will break bread,
and we will remember what it looks like for all to be fed.
Thank you, loving God, for meeting us here once more.
Amen.

*Blessing

P: God our Provider, God our Feast, God our Companion,
+ Bless you now and forever.
C: Amen.

*Closing Hymn

"My Lord, What a Morning" Red #438

REFRAIN
My Lord, what a morning; my Lord, what a morning;
Oh, my Lord, what a morning,
when the stars begin to fall.

You will hear the trumpet sound,
To wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God's right hand,
When the stars begin to fall. REFRAIN

You will hear the sinner cry,
To wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God's right hand,
When the stars begin to fall. REFRAIN (over to 3rd vs)

You will hear the Christian shout,
To wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God's right hand,
When the stars begin to fall. REFRAIN

*Dismissal

As you leave this place, may you speak the truth in love,
may you hold fast to courage, may you be quick to joy,
may you listen for the angels, and may you build each other up,
until we reach God's promised day—
when the lion will lie down with the lamb
and the sun will rise over all of us.
That is what we move toward. That is what we dream of.
So look toward the horizon, and go with hope.
Go in peace. Bring good news to the brokenhearted.
Thanks be to God.

Music "With Thankfulness and Praise"

Serving Today

Reader: Ed Castagna
Coffee Host: Connie Cunningham
Altar Guild: Connie Cunningham
Office Support: Candace Anderson, Sheila Buswell & Sherilyn Jager

Altar Flowers & Xmas Poinsettias

Sign up in the narthex—dedicate to loved ones



Christmas Angel Tree

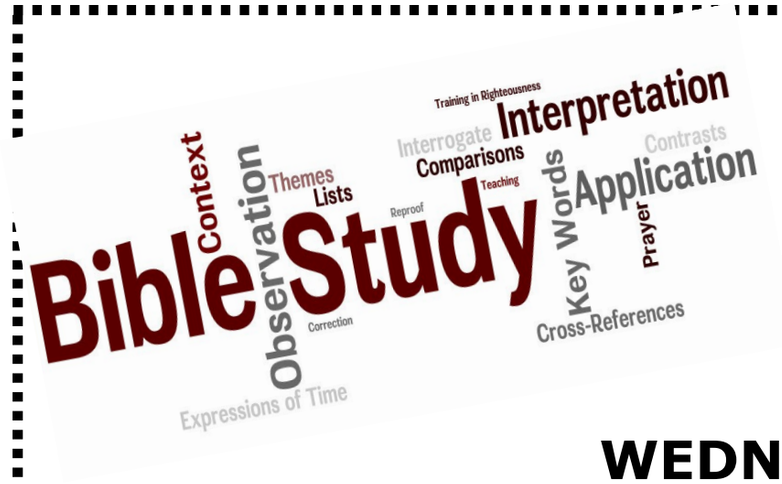
Thank you so much for providing Christmas gifts for Santa Cruz County children!

We request that you return your unwrapped gifts with the tag securely attached to the Church by Sunday, December 13th. The suggested value of each gift is $20.00.

Please DO NOT gift battery operated, fragile or glass items.

Even if all the Angels have been taken from the tree, you are welcome to bring a gift for a child from 5 to 12 years old and we will deliver it to Santa's Capitola Mall wrapping station on Dec. 14th.

Popular gift choices are: Art Supplies, Craft Sets, Legos, Barbies, Hot Wheels, Hair accessories, Soccer Balls, Basketballs, Playdoh, Baby Dolls, Jigsaw Puzzles, Games, Themed items – Frozen, Star Wars, Marvel, Jurassic Park.



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 & uncover some of the deeper truths of our faith. As we grow in our faith, we grow in community.



More Special Music!

Nancy Adams will be singing again Dec. 5
"When You Wish Upon a Star"

Dec. 20—Greg Ferrer, tenor, returns to sing "Sing Joy", a medley of joyful Christmas carols, with a touch of Messiah, thrown in.

Our choir will share their talents weekly with us as well.

Nathan Lapp returns during the Christmas season, always great to work with him. Looking forward to adding brass to worship. It seems all fairly busy.

Come, Listen, a thrill of hope is calling

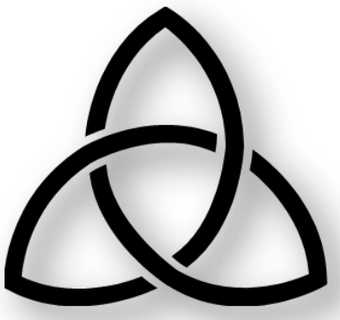
Come Rejoice, a weary world is healing

Come, Watch, a bright star is shining

Come Worship, the Messiah is coming

Advent is here! Tell a friend!
Yours in Christ and Mission, Gary





Trinity Tuesday

(Pub Theology / Discussion)

One Beverage ~ One Hour ~ One Question

(Corrected date)

Tuesday December 1 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 he 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.

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 *Joe Volpi, Bill Schraft, Family of Lew Erickson, Isaac & Marissa, Don, Rob, Barbara Hughes, Priscilla Sanchez, Kenny Sanchez, Jordan Perez, Michael, Kathybelle, Rebecca Wickham, family & friends of Barbara Allen, Oai Families, Julie Franier, France Huddle, Leiahetta, Bonnie, Jamie & Debbie, Cheryl Curry & Family, Sue DV, Nancy, James & Family, Family of Mark Linder, Dorothy Ronning, Rev. Will & Dorothy Sieburg, Pam Huypner, Bob Zigler, Kevin, Liz, Sam, Kathy M., Nancy, Levi, Galahad, Debbie, Sam, Nate Barker, Middle East Peace, Tom Dawson, Dustin, Father Jack Davis, Adolfo, Elida, Jeannie, Anetta, Jane, .*

LONG TERM *Pr. Gary & Corinne Stevenson, 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, Ruth, 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*

Upcoming Events:

Nov. Benevolence Offering = Santa Cruz al Salvador

Nov. 30	“Next Stage Productions” 11 to 1
Nov. 30	Newsletter Collating 2:00 pm
Dec. 1	Scouts 6:00 pm
Dec. 1	Trinity Tuesday 6:30 pm Discretion Brewery 41st Ave. Faith Questions with genuine community
Dec. 2	Bible Study Zoom 7:30 pm
Dec. 3 & 17	Women’s Bold Café 6:00pm devotions and potluck
Dec. 3	Men’s A.A. Group 7:00 pm
Dec. 3	St. Nick stealth PM delivery
Dec. 4	A. A. Group 7:00 pm
Dec. 8	Church Council 6:30 pm
Dec. 10	Circle of Promise 10:30 am
Dec. 12	Embroider’s Guild 10—12:30
Dec. 17	Last day for Poinsettia orders

*** New Congregational directory. Send photo to Judi. ***
or she will snap your photo before or after church.
talkyteacher@gmail.com

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: Kent Madsen & Barbara Rice

Music used by permission Onelicense #A-706539