

St Stephen

a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Robert G. Schaefer, Pastor



Encouraging and
strengthening faith in Jesus,
and sharing the joy of God's love.

December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

10:15am

Holy Communion

Introduction to the Third Sunday of Advent

"Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.



Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude

Welcome

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The assembly stands and turns toward the baptismal font. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, the Lord of Israel who comes to set us free, the mighty Savior who comes to show mercy, the Dawn from on high who guides us into peace.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of your kingdom: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

You come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness: Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

You will come in glory with salvation for your people: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The presiding minister announces God's forgiveness.

Almighty and merciful God grant you healing, pardon, and forgiveness of all your sins.

Amen.

During this time the CDC and the Bishop's Office recommend against congregational singing. In the building, the ensemble will sing verses 1 and 2, on our behalf as the procession moves to the Advent wreath. The words and music are here for your meditation, please do not sing out loud.

GATHERING SONG:

Christ, Be Our Light

ELW #715

Following verses 1 & 2, the wreath is blessed and the second candle is lit. The blessing concludes:

... Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

Then the ensemble sings verse 5.



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for
3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for
4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for
5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957
Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell
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APOSTOLIC GREETING

The presiding minister and assembly greet each other.

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

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept, then the presiding minister leads the prayer.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The assembly sits.



Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

A reading from Isaiah.

¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 126

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

³The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

⁵Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from First Thessalonians.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

L: The word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

After a brief silence, the assembly stands to welcome the gospel.

The Gospel Acclamation is sung by a leader

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

P: ✠ The Holy Gospel, according to John.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize

with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

The Rev. Robert G. Schaefer

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

The ensemble sings verses 1& 2 of the following hymn on behalf of the assembly.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding

ELW# 246



1 Hark! a thrill - ing voice is sound - ing! “Christ is near,” we
2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth’s bond - age
3 See the Lamb, so long ex - spect - ed, come with par - don
4 So, when next he comes in glo - ry and the world is
5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther



hear it say. “Cast a - way the works of dark - ness,
let us rise; Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling,
down from heav’n. Let us haste, with tears of sor - row,
wrapped in fear, he will shield us with his mer - cy
and the Son with the ev - er - last - ing Spir - it



all you chil - dren of the day!”
shines up - on the morn - ing skies.
one and all, to be for - giv’n;
and with words of love draw near.
while un - end - ing a - ges run!

Text: Latin hymn, 1632; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–1878
Music: MERTON, William H. Monk, 1823–1889

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A: On this Third Sunday of Advent, we join in prayer that the God of power and might will comfort all people, and come quickly to this weary world, hearing our prayers for everyone in need.

After each petition of the prayer is said:

A: We pray for _____:

C: **Mighty Savior, come and save us.**

P: God beyond all things, God dwelling among us now, receive these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, who came, who comes, and who is coming now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

The assembly sits.



MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Invitation to Offering

SETTING THE TABLE

The Offering Song, is sung by a leader on behalf of the assembly.



O - so - sŏ o - so - sŏ, pyong - hwa - ũi - im - gŭm

- 1 Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
- 2 Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.
- 3 Come now and set us free, O God, our Sav - ior.
- 4 Come, Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y.



u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sŏ.

- Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.

Text: Geonyong Lee, b. 1947; tr. Marion Pope
 Music: OSOSO, Geonyong Lee, b. 1947
 Text and music © Geonyong Lee

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The assembly stands.

Blessing of the Video System and OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray. Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. Hear our prayer in the name of the one for whom we wait, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The presiding minister greets the assembly and invites all present to give thanks.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

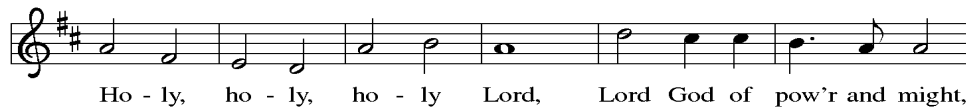
Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

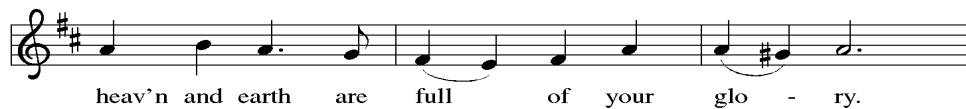
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The presiding minister continues to give thanks:

...Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup...We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit...Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours... one God, now and forever.

Amen.

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

Communion

The bread is broken for the communion.

P: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Taste and see, the Lord is good.

The assembly is seated.

Lamb of God and the communion song are sung by a leader on behalf of the assembly.

Lamb of God

Cor - de - ro de Dios, tú que qui-tas el pe-ca-do del mun-do;
O Lamb of . . God, you . . take a-way the sin of the world; . .

ten pie-dad de no - so - tros, ten pie - dad de no - so - tros.
have . . mer-cy up - on us, have . . mer-cy up - on us.

Cor - de - ro de Dios, tú que qui-tas el pe-ca-do del mun-do;
O Lamb of . . God, you . . take a-way the sin of the world; . .

ten pie-dad de no - so - tros, ten pie - dad de no - so - tros.
have . . mer-cy up - on us, have . . mer-cy up - on us.

Cor-de - ro de Dios, tú que qui-tas el pe-ca-do del mun-do;
O Lamb of . . God, you . . take a-way the sin of the world; . .

da - nos tu paz, da - nos tu paz.
grant us your peace, grant us your peace.

Communion Song:

Light Dawns on a Weary World

ELW# 726

1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea-tures, once for -

see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a

wea - ry world: the prom-ised day of jus - tice comes.
wea - ry world: the prom-ised feast of plen - ty comes.
wea - ry world: the prom-ised green of E - den comes.

Refrain
The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;
the hills and moun-tains shall break forth with sing - ing!
We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,
as all the world in won-der ech - oes sha - lom.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
Music: TEMPLE OF PEACE, William P. Rowan, b. 1951
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The assembly stands and the assisting minister leads the prayer after communion.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, Lord, for these heavenly gifts, kindle us with the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; for he is Lord, now and forever. **Amen.**



Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, and may

All may make the sign of the cross as they receive God's blessing.

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

Verses 1-3 of the Sending Song is sung by the ensemble on behalf of the assembly. The assembly turns to face the cross as it passes by.

SENDING SONG:

Hark, the Glad Sound!

ELW# 239



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.



In response to the amazing love, mercy and grace of God, St. Stephen Lutheran Church is a community that openly welcomes all who are seeking God's divine love and grace. All are welcome in this place regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation or gender identity, economic situation or life situation, marital or relationship status, or your doubts about faith and church. Our unity is in Christ. Your family, children, friends, spouses and partners are welcome. Your diversity and uniqueness enriches and expands our community. We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

IN OUR PRAYERS...

In our prayers today are these members of our homebound and others of our parish family in need of healing: George, Carol Chmelynski, Lisa Castaneda, Kelly Jacobson, Carol Jacobson, Marti Stroberg, Dolores Lauterberg, Laurel Blake, Dorothy Johnson, James Loggins, Don Schutt, Normagene Richardson, Mildred Grady, Rosie & Jimmy Fennelli, Pat Engle.

PRAYERS FOR FRIENDS OF THE PARISH

✠ Gene, Chris, Amanda, Betty, Joanna, Susan, Annette, Madison, Mason, Betty, Chuck, Denny, Bill, George, Jordan, Carol Patterson, Randy, Missy, Ted, Wanda, Greg, Jason, Melissa, Jon, Carolyne, Jim, Camille, Ann, Valerie, Gino and family ✠ San & Debbie Seckel, Lyndsay & Jody Webb, Shauna Widman, Craig, Aiden, Chandler, Becky, Braemen, Cheryl, Robert, Janice, Jerry, Betty, Sharon, Rae, Carol, Taylor, Nettie, Ed, Donna, Kristi, and Milena.

IN A FACILITY OR HOMEBOUND:

Evelyn Braun – 6152 Verde Trail Room 106 Boca Raton, Fl. 33433

Jim Loggins - John Knox Village – Woodlands 700 SW 4th St, Pompano Beach, FL 33060

Bud Danker - 3020 N. Ridge Road Apartment W-316 Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Welcome to in person worship!!! Please respect our guidelines:

- We expect everyone to use face masks when in the building. If you forget your face covering, we have extras for you, but no one can enter the building without a face covering and they must be worn at all times except at the moment of communion. Face coverings and water bottles will be available near the entrance to the nave for those who need them.
- Offering plates will be placed on a stand as people enter and exit. Greeters will stand behind a table warmly welcoming worshippers from a distance.
- We continue to encourage electronic giving.
- Outside doors and bathroom doors will be propped open, so no one touches a doorknob or handle.
- Initially, following CDC guidelines, all congregational singing will be limited to an individual or ensemble who will sing on behalf of the assembly.
- For now, only the verbal greeting of Peace will be exchanged in the liturgy. Sharing the peace for now should be nothing more than exchanging a simple bow to those on your right and left.
- There will be one communion station, single file, following the ushers' directions and the markings on the floor to maintain social distancing. At the time of holy communion, exit the pew via the side isles, and go to the rear of the church. As you round the corner to the central isle there will be another touchless sanitizing station. Please sanitize your hands and proceed down the center isle to receive the sacrament following the floor markers. The pastor distributing the host will try to avoid touching communicants' hands as much as possible. Communicants are reminded to come forward with flat outstretched hands.
- Following the Liturgy, the pastor will be present outside the outer doors to greet people, but will remain socially distanced with no physical contact.



New Video System dedicated this morning...

This HD system which includes monitors in both the front and rear of the church to project worship texts and images is given to the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Edith Reichenbach by her children Jeanne Pettit and Richard Reichenbach and their families.

Time for poinsettias to beautify our sanctuary at Christmas

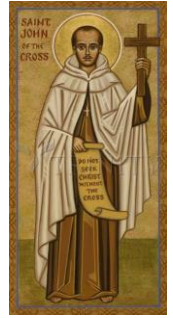
Last day to get your poinsettias! The poinsettias can be dedicated to loved ones and will decorate our altar during the Christmas season. If you wish to leave them for the duration of the Christmas



season, we would welcome that! Christmas will continue this year through January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. Donation: \$10.00. You may bring or send the money to church or give online, using the website on the giving page.

Final Online Advent Evening Prayer this Wednesday!

This Wednesday, in the last of our series on *Praying with the Saints*, we will consider St. John of the Cross. A Christian mystic in the sixteenth century, John encountered God's love for him through an interior life of intense prayer and contemplation--central themes of our Advent preparation. The service will be live streamed on Facebook and the St. Stephen website. It will also be recorded for later viewing. Join us live at 5pm this Wednesday!



Christmas Eve at St. Stephen: reservations requested please...

As usual, we have two services scheduled for Christmas Eve:

5:30pm Family Christ Mass with Candlelight and Children's Message

7:30pm Festival Sung Christ Mass with Candlelight

Unfortunately, this year, because of the pandemic, you will need reservations to attend one of these services because of the limited space. Each service will be limited to around 50 people. **You can reserve space by calling the office and speaking with Aidee from 9:30am—12:30pm any weekday beginning on December 1. The office number is 954-942-4473.** If you call outside of office hours, please leave your name, your phone number, and the number of people in your party. Reservations will be on a first come first served basis. Both Masses will be livestreamed on Facebook and the website as well.

Change for Change Tower: Discretionary Fund

As the holidays approach, during the months of November and December we will dedicate the Change for Change Tower to support a new ongoing Pastor's Discretionary Fund. During this difficult time, it will allow the pastor to help with emergency needs in the community and in the congregation. This would include such things as emergency fuel for a stranded motorist, food vouchers for the hungry on a day the Holy Grill is not serving, bus passes, emergency overnight accommodations, or other special emergency needs that might arise. Please give generously to get this fund going. **Bring your loose change and bills to church and let's fill up the Change for Change Tower. You may give on line by following the link on our homepage at: www.ststephenlutheran.net**



Congregation Meeting to elect new Council Members, today.

We will convene following the liturgy. Our plan for this meeting to elect council members includes both an in-person meeting following the Eucharist and a live online Zoom meeting for those who are not comfortable gathering in the church. Online participants will be able to view the proceedings, speak, and vote online.

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