

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.

November 29, 2020

First Sunday of Advent

10:15am

Holy Communion

Introduction to the First Sunday of Advent

Advent came to be a four-week season of preparation for Christmas, much as Lent prepares for Easter. The church does not celebrate Christmas until the night of December 24, a celebration that lasts until the Baptism of Our Lord, the second Sunday of January. The color of Advent is deep blue, the color of the sky from which Christ will return, the color of Blessed Mary, the color of hope. Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.



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.**

Brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for Christ's advent among us, let us confess our sin before God and each other.

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:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW #257

Following verse 2, the wreath is blessed and the first candle is lit. The blessing concludes:

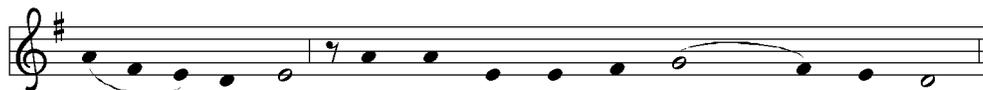
... Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

Then the ensemble sings verse 3.



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

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 your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father 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 64:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— ²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- on the cherubim.

**²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴O LORD God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;

you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

**6You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

7Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**17Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

**18And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call up- on your name.**

**19Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **4**I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, **5**for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—**6**just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—**7**so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. **8**He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9**God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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: Mark 13:24-37

P: ✝ The Holy Gospel, according to Mark.

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

[Jesus said:] **24**“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, **25**and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. **26**Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. **27**Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. **28**“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch

becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

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

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

ELW# 244



1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride - groom near;
 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'rings bore,
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.
 go forth as he ap - proach - es with al - le - lu - ias clear.
 shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.
 a - rise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.
 A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the bride - groom is at hand.
 in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660–1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823–1907
 Music: HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG, Swedish folk tune

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 first Sunday of the church year, let us pray that the God of power and might will tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world.

After each petition of the prayer is said:

A: Stir up your strength, O God.

C: Come to help us.

P: Eternal Father, strong to save, receive our prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus, who came as a child, who comes in word and sacrament, and who will come in power and might to bring us life, and who is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**



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.

OFFERING SONG:

What Feast of Love

ELW# 487



1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban - quet come from heav - en?
 2 What light of truth is of - fered here, what cov - e - nant from heav - en?
 3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim - son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last - ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?
 What hope of ev - er - last - ing life, what won - drous word is giv - en?
 What stream of ev - er - last - ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.
 This, this is Christ the king, the sun come down from heav - en.
 This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!
 Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is giv - en!
 Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is giv - en!

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939
 Music: GREENSLEEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.
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The assembly stands.

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:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

✠ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

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:

My Lord, What a Morning

ELW# 438

Refrain

My Lord, what a morn-ing; my Lord, what a morn - ing; oh,

my Lord, what a morn-ing, when the stars be-gin to fall.

- 1 You will hear the trum - pet sound,
- 2 You will hear the sin - ner cry, to wake the na-tions un-der - ground,
- 3 You will hear the Chris-tian shout,

Refrain

look-ing to my God's right hand, when the stars be-gin to fall.

Text: African American spiritual
Music: BURLEIGH, African American spiritual

The assembly stands and the assisting minister leads the prayer after communion.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice as we await the coming of our Savior. In this eucharist you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **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, 2, & 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:

Soon and very soon

ELW# 439



1 Soon and ver - y soon
2 No more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
3 No more dy - in' there,
4 Soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
no more dy - in' there,
soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King.
no more dy - in' there,
soon and ver - y soon



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're goin' to see the King!



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -



jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah.

Text: Andraé Crouch, b. 1945
Music: VERY SOON, Andraé Crouch
Text and music © 1976 Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music, admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing
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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, Randy Mottesheard, 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

Jordan, Gene. Chris, Amanda, Betty, Joanna, Susan, Annette, Madison, Mason, Betty, Chuck, Denny, Bill ✠Carol, Missy, Ted, Wanda, Greg, Jason, Melissa, Jon, Carlyne, Jim, Camille, Ann, Valerie. ✠ Belinda, Marjorie, Janice, Letty Gonzalez, Gene, Annette, Joanna, Susan, Betty, Bruce, Bill, Carol, Eric Hecker, E. Kuckert, Rose Blair, The Chantal family.

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.



Online Advent Evening Prayer this Wednesday!

In addition to Advent Sunday in-person worship, we will gather online for Advent Evening Prayer live from the sanctuary at 5:00pm on Wednesdays, December 3, 9, and 16. These services will be live streamed on Facebook and the St. Stephen website. Join us live at 5 online Wednesdays in Advent. These services will also be recorded for later viewing.

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**



Save the Date: Congregation Meeting to elect new Council Members, Sunday, December 13.

Our constitution calls for us to elect congregation council members in December. This year the pandemic threatens our in-person gatherings. Our plan for this meeting to elect council members include both an in-person meeting following the Eucharist on the Third Sunday in Advent 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.

Congregation Council Meeting next Wednesday, December 2.

Council members, watch your email for the Zoom invitation and reports for our 7:00pm meeting.

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