

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Love God, Love People, Form Faith.

One of 13,000 Stephen Ministry Congregations Around the World

We believe that community is beautiful and messy and fulfilling and conflicted and...the POINT. God calls us together into community for the sake of one another, our neighbors, and creation. We don't always get it right, but we trust that when we center the love and grace that Jesus taught, we will get it right more often than not.

You are welcome here! We don't expect perfect, put-together people; we don't want you to conform to us and our ways; we want you to show up as who you are and to experience the love and grace of God as we have experienced it. And we hope that once you do, you will join us in sharing it with others too.



December 14, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent

For Your Prayers –Dec 15-21, 2025

Lectionary readings for this week:

- Dec 15: Isaiah 29:17-24; Acts 5:12-16; Psalm 42
- **Dec 16:** Ezekiel 47:1-12; Jude 17-25; Psalm 42
- Dec 17: Zechariah 8:1-17; Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34; Psalm 42
- Dec 18: 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Galatians 3:23-29; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- Dec 19: 2 Samuel 7:18-22; Galatians 4:1-7; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- Dec 20: 2 Samuel 7:23-29; John 3:31-36; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Next Sunday: Isaiah 7:10-16 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (7) Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25

<u>Join your prayers for healing</u> with God's desires for Ingrid Brown, Preston Burton, Kristin Carter, Bob & Ginny Cummings, Edith Haecker, Sharon Jacobs, Rita Kristiansen, Jim Mayfield, Julie Meeks, Carole Meyer, Carl and Mitchell Stauffer, and George Vonderheide.

<u>Pray for those unable to come to worship</u>: Ailene Bartlett, Ed Brown, Bob and Angie Groom, Pat Janot, Marilyn Johnson, Jeanne Nelson, Darlene Simon, and Kay Wasaff.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Jerry, Kay C., Susan, Rosa, Celeste, and Isaac, Sam Areheart, Randy Altona, Mary Anderson, Phyllis Andrews, Carl Baker, Charles Baugh, Donald and Carol Baum, Robi Bayard, Jeffrey Berry, Sr., June Brantley, Carol Bergh, Mary Bloom, Richard Boger, Doug Bolick, Kay Braman, Bob Britcher, Raymond Bunn, Cagel Family, Karin Cavanaugh, Amaree Cluff, Ruth Ann Coski, Marie Davito, Pat D'Orazio, Judy Drezek, Becky Drury, Darrin and Rosemary Dunn, Eric Farrell, Neal & Julie Fenstermaker, Kay Flatin, Tanya Fritz, Joel Gillespie, Joan Goodhart, Kenny Hacker, The family of Scott Hadly, Charee Hampton, Sue Hassan and family, Andy Havola, Nick Havola, Bradley, Kim, Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Lisa Hill, Doris Hillenbrand, Michelle Holdsworth, Jaxon Ireland, Claudia Jacobik, Justice Jefferson, Naomi Jefferson Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, The Kennedy family, Jenn Kramer, Elaine Lane, Jeff Laub, Pat Layton, Marnah Lund, Keara Mahony, Trish Macerelli, Laura Margolin, Ellen Martin, Mabel Mater, Jack Mayfield, Jackie Mazzone, Tom Mifflin, Jimmy Mitchell, Liz Montalvo, Jim Monteith, Ed Moninger, Kim Morris, Bob Myers, Jeanette Osborn, Maricel Paulin, The Peterson family, Janet Popelas, Coral Pumley, Scott Radley, Kurt Recktenwald, Brian Ritter, Lou Schuster, Pamela Sharp, Kelsey Slay, Vasili Soultoukis, Kenneth & Laura Spencer, Chad Strausbaugh, Al Stern, Monika Stern, Janis Stevenson, George and Jewel Thomas, Karli Wallace Thompson, Jenn Tyson, Brenda Webster, Jim Weickgenant, Matt Weilmuenster, Roselee Williams, Caleb Winig, and Elaine Wrich.

Third Sunday of Advent

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

Welcome

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (Sung)

- 1 Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.
- 2 Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,

gently lead them homeward.

3 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.

Prayer: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and waters would break forth in the wilderness. Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath. Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever. **Amen.**

Centering Music Lullaby

Lynette L. Maynard

Confession and Forgiveness The assembly stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God, who comes to wake us from sleep, who leads us into the light of grace.

Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and neighbor. Silence for reflection and self-examination.

God of all time,

we confess that we have not prepared for your merciful reign among us, we ignore our neighbors in need and fail in the labor of justice and peace. In your mercy forgive us. Grant us wisdom to welcome your light and to seek the things that will endure until Christ comes again in glory. Amen.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. In **\(\frac{1}{2}\)** Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven, and all things are made new. Rejoice in this good news! **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

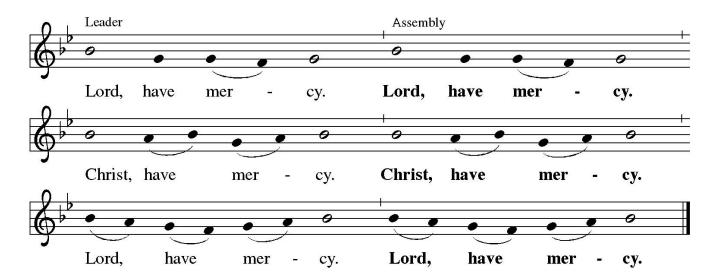
Now the Heavens Start to Whisper

ACS 901 Bulletin page 9

Greeting

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

Kyrie



Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

II. Word: God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song

First Reading Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. 8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Reader: "The Word of the Lord." Response: "Thanks be to God."

Psalm 146:5-10



- ⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob ¹ for their help, whose hope is in the ¹ LORD their God;
- 6 who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that 1 is in them; who keeps promis-1 es forever;
- ⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to ¹ those who hunger.
 The LORD sets the ¹ captive free.
- $^{8}\mbox{The LORD}$ opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who 1 are bowed down;

the LORD | loves the righteous. REFRAIN

- ⁹The LORD cares ¹ for the stranger;
 - the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way I of the wicked.
- The Lord shall | reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah! REFRAIN

Second Reading James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Reader: "The Word of the Lord." Response: "Thanks be to God."

Gospel Acclamation



The proper verse may be sung, or all may sing this verse.

Repeat alleluia

I am sending my messen- | ger before you,* who will prepare your | way before you. (Matt. 11:10)

8:30 Gospel Matthew 3:1-12

Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.

Response after announcement of the Gospel: "Glory to you, O Lord."

¹ In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ³ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.' "4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, 9 and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Response at the conclusion of the Gospel: "Praise to you, O Christ."

8:30 Sermon:

Soft Robes and Rough Roads

Pastor Jon Nelson

11:00 Children's Program Chord Story: At the Manger Anthem Take This Light

Kathleen Wissinger Mark Patterson

Hymn of the Day 8:30 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

ELW 242 Bulletin page 10

11:00 Silent night

Prayers

Each petition concludes: God of grace, hear our prayer.

III. Meal: God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

Offering Invitation

The story of Advent is a story of people power: under state violence and amidst evil's plans. The faithful gather in search of hope, co-creating joy, sharing in risk for the sake of lasting peace. Seeking Christ, enfleshed on earth. May it be so among us as we bring our offerings.

Offering of Music 8:30 People, Look East Flute, Thom Recktenwald

David Cherwien

11:00 Prepare the Royal Highway Offertory Prayer

Zebulon M Highben

God of the Vulnerable, God of the Survivors, God of Those Yearning for Ease - your care and sustenance draw close to all facing threats from thrones on high. Make us brave collaborators with you and our neighbors seeking to make shelter in the midst, make sanctuary for people and dreams, make trouble where evil moves too easily. With these resources and all the offerings of our heart, mind, and body we pray. **Amen.**

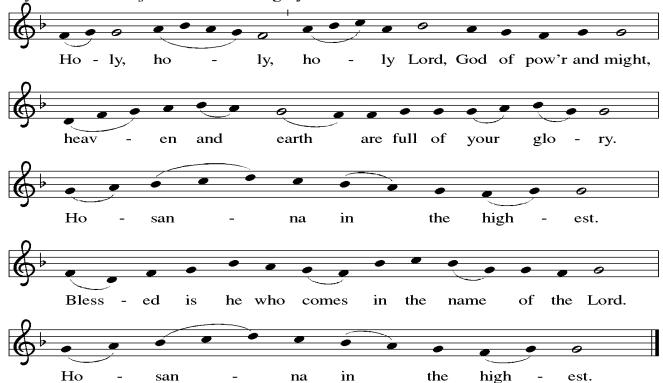
The Great Thanksgiving

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 ... with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



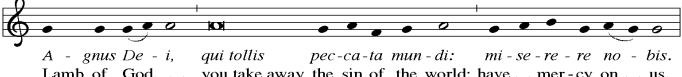
Words of Institution

The 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.

Holy Communion When receiving Communion, either stand or kneel at the Rail. Pastor will distribute the bread and a Communion Assistant will come with a tray of pre-filled cups of wine and grape juice. The juice will be in the middle of the tray. Gluten-free wafers are available as an alternative to bread. All are welcome to the Lord's Supper.

Lamb of God (Cantor sings first in Latin; Congregation responds in English)



Lamb of God, . . you take away the sin of the world; have . . mer-cy on . . us.



A - gnus De - i, qui tollis pec-ca-ta mun-di: mi-se-re-re no-bis. Lamb of God, . . you take away the sin of the world; have . . mer-cy on . . us.



A - gnus De - i, qui tollis pec-ca-ta mun-di: do-na no-bis pa - cem. you take away the sin of the world; grant . . us . . . peace. Lamb of God, . .

Communion Hymn

He Comes to Us as One Unknown

ELW 737 Bulletin page 11

Table Blessing

Prayer after Communion

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Sending: God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

Sending Hymn

Freedom Is Coming

ACS 903

Dave Mackie

Bulletin pages 12-13

Blessing

May God who comes among us, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. Amen.

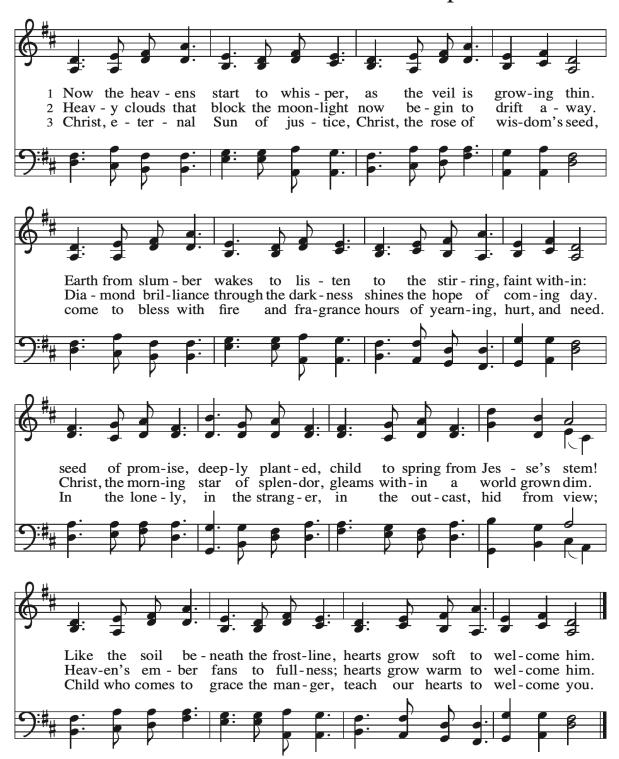
Dismissal

Go in peace. Keep awake. Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper



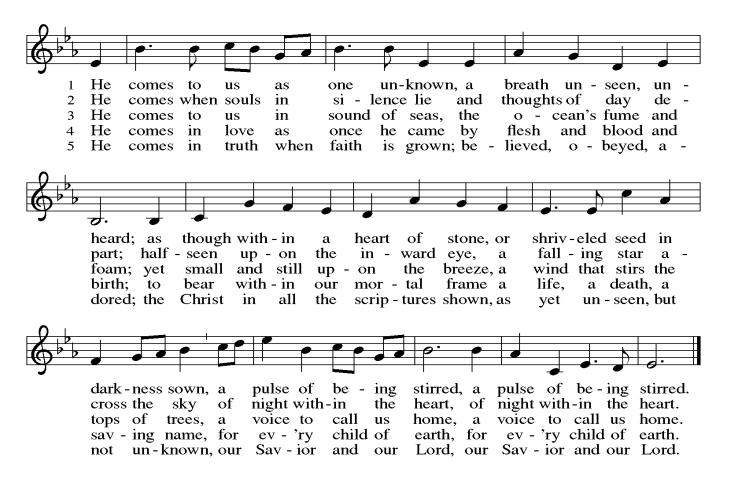
Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953 Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody; arr. hymnal version Text © 2006 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved. Arr. © 2020 Augsburg Fortress

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn



Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950 Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen Text and music © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

He Comes to Us as One Unknown



Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926 Music: REPTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918 Text © 1984 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

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Freedom Is Coming





2 Oh, Jesus. Jesus is coming. Oh, yes, I know.

Text: South African; transc. Freedom Is Coming, 1984

Music: FREEDOM IS COMING, South African; transc. Freedom Is Coming

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As We Gather

Restrooms & First Aid

- ❖ A gender-neutral, family restroom and a Women's restroom can be found in the hallway behind our Worship Space.
- ❖ Additional Men's and Women's restrooms can be found on the lower level of the church building.
- ❖ A first aid kit and an A.E.D. can be found hanging on the wall in the hallway behind our Worship Space.

Live-streaming

❖ We regularly live-stream our services and cannot guarantee that you will not appear on our YouTube channel. Sitting in the East Wing or the NE section of the Worship Space will minimize your chances of being on screen. We can also bring communion to you if you inform an usher of that desire.

Parents! Thanks for bringing your children to worship.

- ❖ Did you know that intergenerational worship is the single most important activity encouraging children's faith formation? (See vibrantfaith.org)
- ❖ When parents and children need to take a break for a few minutes, there's a play area (aka "prayground") with toys and books in the East wing of the Worship Space.
- ❖ Age-appropriate activity bags are available in the Gathering Space ask an usher for assistance.

Assistance is Available for You:

- ❖ An induction loop is provided for the benefit of hearing aid users. To use, please switch your hearing aid to "T."
- **❖ Large print** worship materials are available ask an usher.

<u>Health Update</u>: We always encourage you to monitor yourself for symptoms of illness and to worship from home if you are experiencing any. We have masks and hand sanitizer available for use in our building should you require.

What's Happening Today

Flowers this morning are given by Jim Weilmuenster in memory of Sue Blanks Weilmuenster.

<u>Christmas Caroling</u> We will meet in the fellowship hall to receive our Carol Books and then leave to Brookdale and The Landing

The last date to accept 2025 donations is December 27th

St. Stephen Calendar: -December 14-21, 2025

Our worship service is available on our website <u>www.saintstephenlutheran.net</u>, click on "Worship with Us" and "Services."

SUNDAY, December 14 ~ Third Sunday of Advent

7:45 AM Matins Choir Warm-up (Worship Space)

8:30 AM Worship – Holy Communion (livestreamed on our YouTube channel)

9:45 AM Christmas Program Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)

10:30 AM Chancel Choir Warm-up (Worship Space)

11:00 AM Worship – Holy Communion (Christmas program)

12:50-4PM Christmas Caroling Meet in fellowship hall (Brookdale and The Landing)

MONDAY, December 15

10:00 PM	Staff meeting (Pastor Jon's Office)
1:30 PM	Bible Study (Library/Conference room)

4:30 PM Stephen Ministry meeting (Library/Conference room)

TUESDAY, December 16

5:00 PM Piano Recital (Worship Space)

WEDNESDAY, December 17

8:55 AM	Yoga (Ga	thering	g space	e)

5:00 PM Girl Scouts (Preschool Room)

5:45 PM Women's Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal

6:30 PM Advent Evening Prayer (Worship Space)

7:00 PM Christmas Eve Choir Rehearsal (Worship Space)

7:00 PM AA meeting (Fellowship Hall)

THURSDAY, December 18

5:30 PM St. Stephen Ringers (Worship Space)

FRIDAY, December 19

10:00 AM Christmas Handbell Quartet

SATURDAY, December 20

8:30 AM	Christmas Program Rehearsal (Worship Space)
5:30 PM	AA Meeting (Library/Conference room)

5:30 PM Al-Anon (Gathering Space)

SUNDAY, December 21~ Longest Night

8:30 AM Worship – Healing and Prayer (livestreamed on our YouTube channel)

9:45 AM Matins Choir Rehearsal (Worship Space) 10:30 AM Chancel Choir Warm-up (Worship Space)

11:00 AM Worship – Healing and Prayer

Leading our Worship and Hospitality Today

	(8:30) Bill Dichtel
	(11:00) Harvey Nelson
	(8:30) Diane McCurry
	(11:00)
Audio-Visual Team	(8:30) (11:00)
Bread Baker	Paula Agor
Cantors	(8:30) Karen Shoberg (11:00) Brian Hesse
Communion Assistants	(8:30) Diana Tiller-Dichtel & Bill Dichtel
	(11:00) Terri & Jim Larsen
Flower Delivery	
Greeters/Hosts	(8:30) Paul & Rita Christiansen (11:00) Alison Carney
Lectors	(8:30) Randy Punchard (11:00) George Bass
	Pastor Jon Nelson
Tellers	Jane deSolms, Susan Britcher and Jim Larsen
Ushers	(8:30) JR Lyons and John McCurry (11:00)

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

612 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185 <u>www.saintstephenlutheran.net</u> (757) 229-6688

Love God, Love People, Form Faith.

(St. Stephen Lutheran Church Vision Statement)

All of Us, Called Through Our Baptisms Pastor Jon Nelson (320-295-8861) Karen Ives – Director of Music (757-229-6688) Hollie Jones – Parish Administrator (229-6688) Jessica Kimball – Preschool Director (229-6688) Doing Ministry in the World Pastorjn@saintstephenlutheran.net MusicDir@saintstephenlutheran.net Office@saintstephenlutheran.net Preschool@saintstephenlutheran.net

Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center (873-2273; counselors are in Williamsburg on Thursdays)

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Welcome to St. Stephen Lutheran Church! Please fill this out and drop it in the offering plate or give it to an usher.

December 14, 2025

Name:	
For guests and members with chang	ges:
Address (Home)	
City/StateZij	ρ
Telephone #	
E-Mail Address	
Guests Only: I belong to	
Church Address	
Please check as many as pertain:	
Member	
First time guest	
Regular guest	
Guest (out of town)	
Student at William & Mary	
Looking for a church home	
Desire to speak with pastor	
Would like more information ab	out Stephen Ministry
A 0 D1 1	. 1

Any comments? Please be sure your name is above, so we may respond, if necessary.

Prayer Requests

Please add to the pray	yer list in this month's bulletin and next month's <i>Quill</i> :
Name:	y == ==== ==== = = = ==== = = = = = = =
Please remove from 1	orayer concerns:
Name:	
I/ We need a name tag	<u> </u>

Welcome to St. Stephen Lutheran Church! Please fill this out and drop it in the offering plate or give it to an usher.

December 14, 2025

Name:			
For guests and members with			
Address (Home)			
City/State	Zip		
Telephone #			
E-Mail Address			
Guests Only: I belong to			
Church Address			-
Please check as many as pertai			-
Member			
First time guest			
Regular guest			
Guest (out of town)			
Student at William & Ma			
Looking for a church hor			
Desire to speak with past Would like more information		ephen Ministry	
Any comments? Please be sur	e your name i	s above, so we may re	spond, if necessary.

Prayer Requests

Name:	
Please rem	ove from prayer concerns:
Name:	