



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

December 2025



PEACE

I ended last month with this quote from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice” (Stride Toward Freedom, 1958CE). In that article we explored the biblical understanding of both *Mishpat* and *Tsedaqah*, two elements of “justice” that underpin Jesus’ teachings. MLKJ was not the first prophet to identify the interwoven nature of justice and peace. The prophet Isaiah makes this link clear: “The effect of righteousness (*tsedeqah*) will be peace (*shalom*), and the result of righteousness (*tsedeqah*), quietness and trust forever” (Isaiah 32:17, NRSVUE).

As followers of the Way, we are called to be advocates and agents of both peace and justice. The justice we advocate for is the biblical justice that pushes beyond legality and seeks to protect the vulnerable and strengthen communities and relationships. The justice we are called to be agents of is the sort of justice that stands in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, in particular the orphan, the widow, the resident alien, and the poor. Such systems of justice inevitable lead to peace, and peace of a particular sort, *shalom* peace.

And just as justice leads to peace, peace leads to justice. When we can exist in the whole and full completeness of *shalom*, then living righteously (in the healthy and loving ways that we were created to live) we will find justice as the natural state of community. The biblical understanding of peace, *shalom*, is far deeper than just the absence of conflict or violence. *Shalom* points us to a state of being, and one that leads to flourishing.

Shalom is a wholeness that embraces every dimension of life: our relationship with God, with neighbor, with creation, and even with our own selves. It is integrity made communal. Scripture’s vision of *shalom* imagines streets where children play in safety, tables where there is always enough bread, fields that yield in season, and hearts at rest in God. *Shalom* is not passive serenity but a harmony actively sustained by truth-telling, covenant faithfulness, generosity, and repair. It is the fruit of God’s presence dwelling among a people who order their lives around love of God and love of neighbor.

Because *shalom* is a shared wholeness, it cannot exist without justice. *Mishpat* orders the community’s life so that wrongs are named, harms are addressed, and the vulnerable are defended. *Tsedaqah* shapes our habits and character so that relationships are rightly aligned and mercy becomes our instinct. When *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* take root, peace is not merely declared; it becomes lived reality. And the movement runs both directions: where *shalom* begins to take hold, fear loosens its grip, scarcity loses its plausibility, and we are freed to practice justice with courage and imagination. Peace makes space for justice to flourish; justice gives peace its substance.

In a world tempted to settle for quiet over righteousness, Jesus calls the church to seek the deeper peace of *shalom* – the peace that shelters the widow, welcomes the stranger, lifts the poor, and restores the harmed. This is not a project for the few but a vocation for the whole body. As we align our lives with God’s righteousness and choose solidarity with those at the margins, we become signs of God’s promised future. In pursuing justice we cultivate peace, and in abiding in peace we are strengthened for justice, until by grace, *shalom* becomes the daily air our communities breathe.

In Christ,
Pastor Jon

COME ONE AND ALL TO THE ADVENT EVENT!



On **Sunday, December 7**, from **3:00-6:00 p.m.**, we will celebrate Advent. We are planning for Lefsa making, cookie tasting and sharing our favorite family traditions, including stories and crafts for everyone. Please plan to bring your favorite

family tradition whether that's a plate of cookies or your family nativity scene.

Chris Punchard



NOTES FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

All donations for 2025 must be received by **Saturday, December 27** (*Please take time into consideration if you mail your donation*). Any donations that come in after that date will be credited to 2026. If you have any questions about donations you can reach me at finsec@saintstephenlutheran.net or 757-869-2949.

If you haven't turned in your **pledge card**, remember to either put it in the offering plate or turn it in to the church office.

Karen Nester, Financial Secretary



MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **December 2** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.
- **December 4** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** of this month.

Both gatherings take place at **8:00 a.m.** at the Colonial Pancake House, at the corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, Williamsburg, VA. The get-togethers promote conversation and friendship in a casual setting.



CHRISTMAS AND ADVENT SERVICES

November 30, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays in Advent – Holden Evening Prayer

December 7, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays in Advent – Holden Evening Prayer

December 14, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent

Children's Program at 11:00 a.m.

Caroling **1:00-4:00 p.m.**, meet at Church at **12:30 p.m.**

December 17, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays in Advent – Holden Evening Prayer

December 21, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Longest Night (healing and prayer) – No Communion.

December 24, 7:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve

Worship featuring sermon, choirs and Holy Communion.

December 24, 10:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve

Contemplative Worship Service with Holy Communion.

December 28, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion



STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

December is a season of giving. Your bulletin offers a chance to contribute to the Jean Kuhn Social Ministry Fund—this is a fund that pays for unbudgeted needs that come up throughout the year. Last month I neglected to include an article, but the focus of November includes the Motel Ministry, the Crockpot Ministry and the Homeless Ministry. The Community of Faith Mission (a charity funded by several local churches) runs the homeless shelter during the winter months. In addition to a place to sleep and a warm meal, COFM offers bus tickets, help with job searches etc. Doug Moore is our contact. We joined with the Methodist Church to host a week in November.

Randy Punchard organizes the Motel Ministry, and Jane Gingrich and Sue Neidlinger head up the Crock Pot Ministry which provides crock pot ready food. In the Motel Ministry, members cook and purchase food items to deliver to residents living in area motels, and sometimes additional items or a purchased meal is provided through the Homeless Ministry or other funds.

With increasing prices, job lay-offs, health insurance cuts and other circumstances, local food and clothing banks are facing increasing demand. Throughout the year, St. Stephen offers ways to get involved and to help those less fortunate.

We too may be facing economic uncertainty. But we can all pray for these ministries and many of us can contribute our time to help others.

The December focus is Godparents of Tanzania in which members donate to provide educational opportunities to students there.

On January 25, representatives of enCircle (formerly Lutheran Social Services) will be here between services to talk briefly about their work which includes Minnick Schools for students challenged in meeting behavioral, academic, vocational and developmental goals in public schools; treatment foster care for unaccompanied

minors coming into the country; counseling and other work in southwestern Virginia.

Susan Williamson

GREATER WILLIAMSBURG CARDIOLOGY CARE SURVEY



My class this term includes an MBA student team currently working with an area healthcare system doing research as part of a graduate course. They are doing community research by conducting a community survey. The survey includes approximately 15-17 short questions and should take about 5-7 minutes to complete. All responses are confidential and anonymous, and no personal health information will be collected. The survey is intended only for individuals who have received cardiology or heart-related care (such as evaluations, procedures, or follow-up visits) within the past five years.

[Here is the link for the survey.](#)

Please feel free to pass the survey along to others you feel may be willing to take it, who live in the Virginia peninsula area.

Thanks in advance for supporting our W&M MBA students' research.

Lou Rossiter



The Altar on All Saints Sunday



MUSIC NOTES

"Tis the Season"

As always, this time of year brings multiple holiday events including concerts, parties, shopping, eating, and traditional TV fare. Your St. Stephen musicians, young and old, are also quite busy preparing for a December filled with worship opportunities in preparation for the arrival of the Christ child. Some of those Advent/Christmas events are listed below:

- **November 30, December 7, 14, 21**
We sing Plainsong chant for the musical portions of our Advent liturgy. We sing *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* as we light the Advent wreath. This Yiddish folk tune, *Tif in Veldele*, comes from the first line of the love song that goes with this tune in *A Treasury of Jewish Folksong* by Ruth Rubin. The title means "Deep in the Forest."
- **December 3, 10, and 17 – 6:30 p.m.**
Wednesday Advent services will be led by our Choral Scholars as we sing the much beloved Holden Evening Prayer.
- **December 14 – 11:00 a.m. Worship**
Our third Sunday of Advent will feature our younger choristers and chimers in a "Chord Story" entitled *At the Manger*. What is a "Chord Story?" Glad you asked. We are pairing a Bible Story narrative (yes, this one is about the Birth of Jesus) with chimes representing the characters of the story – either by playing a specific note, or chord, or pattern. There is also a chance we might accompany "Silent Night" with our chimes.
- **December 14 – 1:00-4:00 p.m.**
Christmas Caroling to two of our retirement communities. All are invited to raise their voices in song. No experience required, only bring your Christmas good cheer.

- **December 21 – 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Worship**
St. Stephen Ringers are featured this fourth Sunday of Advent as we also celebrate the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. Included in our worship will be a service of healing and prayer.
- **December 24 – 7:00 p.m. Worship**
Between 7:00 and 7:30 p.m., our choirs will present an extended prelude featuring a women's choir, some keyboard duets, a handbell quartet, and a mixed choir. Our women's choir will present a work by Kirke Mechem, *Seven Joys of Christmas*. Mechem is an American composer who recently celebrated his 100th birthday. He has composed more than 250 works in almost every form and has been referred to as the "dean of American choral composers." Mechem composed this work for the Chamber Singers of the San Francisco College for Women. His goal was to set lesser known, however charming carols from different countries to paint different aspects of joy for the Christmastide. Our ladies will be singing five of the seven carols. Our mixed choir repertoire will also include carols from other countries: Poland, Colombia, and West Indies. During our worship service we will also hear an Austrian carol as well as a carol by American composer, Charles Ives.
- **December 24 – 10:00 p.m. Worship**
Gilbert (Tenor) and Alexandra Lopez (Mezzo-soprano) will return to lead our music at this contemplative Christmas Eve worship service.
- **December 28 – 9:45 a.m. Worship**
ONE SERVICE ONLY
Our traditional Christmas Lessons and Carols service will have the return of our Orchaband for musical leadership.

Please offer your Advent/Christmas thanksgivings to the many musical servants who provide countless hours of rehearsal time and talent in bringing meaningful worship to our St. Stephen family.

Merry Christmas,
Karen Ives, Music Director

thank you



Thank you for your in-kind donation of 16 pounds of food to the Williamsburg House of Mercy.

On average we receive 18,000 pounds of in-kind donations per month and rely on these to supplement our costs in providing to the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you for remembering the Williamsburg House of Mercy through your donation.

Liz Buckley, Executive Director



DECEMBER

2	Russ Dabel	Gisela Fashing
	Peter Geier	
4	Aidan Jansson	Mitchell Stauffer
	Sarah Toler	
6	Gerry Johnson	
8	Kristin Cosby	
9	Beatrice Ehrhardt	
12	Jean Gulesian	Barb Youngk
13	Marj Gottschalk-Trone	
	Lori Harms	
15	Carla Javier	Sonya Lim
16	Lori Janke	Diane McCurry
	Tracie Powers	Marie Nelson
17	Elara Strand	
20	Kathryn Ogborn	Tom Peterkin
21	Casey Toler	Robert Voigt
24	Amy Bergh	Jan MacQueston
25	Ann Powers	
30	Rosalie Frey	



STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



Finding Calm in the Holiday Storm

*How a Stephen Minister Can Help Bring Peace
During a Stressful Season*

*"Sometimes the best gift we can give is simply being
there."*

For many, the holiday season brings joy, connection, and celebration. But for others, it can stir feelings of grief, stress, or loneliness. Memories of loved ones who have passed away, financial concerns, strained family relationships, or just the fast pace of the season can weigh heavily on the heart. In moments like these, the caring presence of a Stephen Minister can make all the difference.

Stephen Ministers don't try to fix problems or offer advice. Instead, they bring a listening ear and a compassionate heart. During the holidays — when emotions may swing from hope to sorrow — that steady, confidential companionship helps care receivers share their feelings honestly and safely. Being truly heard can lighten a heavy load.

The holidays often come with unrealistic expectations — perfect decorations, cheerful gatherings, endless energy. A Stephen Minister can gently help a care receiver release those pressures and focus on what truly matters. Together, they may explore practical ways to simplify the season: setting healthy boundaries, saying "no" when necessary, and finding quiet moments for rest and prayer. These small choices can transform the season from stressful to meaningful.

For those who are grieving, the holidays can reopen wounds. A Stephen Minister can help a care receiver honor memories while nurturing hope. Simple acts — lighting a candle, creating a memory ornament, or sharing stories — can be healing rituals that hold both grief and love in balance.

Most of all, Stephen Ministers help care receivers stay grounded in God's presence. They remind those they serve that Christ came into the world for people in need — the weary, the burdened, the brokenhearted.

Through prayer, Scripture, and quiet reflection, a Stephen Minister can help others rediscover the true meaning of the season: God's steadfast love and peace that surpasses understanding.

As we move into the holidays, let's remember that the greatest gift we can offer one another is Christ's light — shining through our presence, patience, and compassion. Stephen Ministers are instruments of that light, helping care receivers find hope, comfort, and calm in a season that can so easily become overwhelming.

Pete Davis, Stephen Minister

KITCHEN KEEPERS



I would like to introduce you to the Kitchen Keepers of St Stephen.

We are a small but mighty group who work to keep the kitchen clean and safe. Our cleaning contract with an outside contractor does NOT include the kitchen! So this group, once a month, cleans the refrigerator, disinfects counters and cabinets, cleans the dishwasher filter, the drip pans on the stove and washes the floor.

As you can see it's a lot to keep up with. So we are asking anyone or any group that uses the kitchen to be sure that you have a person or two designated as your clean-up crew. Please wipe down the counters, wash your dishes, put them away and take home any food that is left over. PLEASE DON'T LEAVE DIRTY DISHES IN THE SINK, IT ATTRACTS BUGS.

Thank you for your help. If you have questions, please contact **Chris Punchard**.



ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

November Highlights from the Preschool: *A Month of Gratitude and Community*

In November, our preschool leaned into the spirit of gratitude with meaningful community-oriented activities. Our Hippos, Bears, and Frogs classes enjoyed a wonderful trip to Jamestown with their parents and teachers, where they learned about the first settlers and the Native American Indians who lived in the area. It was a beautiful day filled with learning, connection, and a great opportunity for our staff to get to know our preschool families better.

Thanks to the generosity of our families, we collected about **35 bags** filled with food, diapers, and essential household items for the **FISH Food Pantry**, along with additional lunch items to support the **COFM mission**.

This month, our congregation also came together to celebrate the beautiful life of **Linda Laity Hite** during a heartfelt playground dedication ceremony. The recording is available on YouTube and has been shared with our preschool families and teachers.

Throughout November, our teachers have been focusing on lessons of gratitude – modeling for our students how to show love by being helpers in both big and small ways.

Jessica Kimball, Preschool Director





GODPARENTS FOR TANZANIA UPDATE

Here is the latest news from Kristin Westermann at Godparents for Tanzania:

I saw Gladness back in June. She has completed the first year of a three-year Bachelor's degree program at the Tanzania Institute of Accountancy in Dar es Salaam. She is the first student from our program to qualify for this university, which is quite selective. She is studying Public Sector Accounting and Finance, and she loves it. Her first-year coursework included: financial accounting, business law, public sector and financial management, qualitative methods, economics, and public sector accounting.

Gladness is a quiet young woman who really loves math. She told me that her dream job would be working as an analyst for the Bank of Tanzania, because she would be happy doing math all day. Sometime in the not-too-distant future, I expect to turn on BBC World News or Al Jazeera and see Gladness being interviewed regarding the Tanzania economy. She is very bright, and it's gratifying to see her growing and developing her gifts.



University students begin the new academic year on Monday. (This is a month later than usual due to the recent presidential election and ensuing violence.) Her expenses are \$1,500 per semester. She will also do field work during her second year, which means that we will need to cover her transportation, accommodation and food, which will be an additional \$500. That brings her second year total to \$3,500.

In other news...Rehema is employed as a teacher! And she is now a mama to an infant son. Roggy continues to support his wife and two daughters through his work with Tanzania's national park system. He has been

promoted to a management role and discovered that he really enjoys administration.

Thank you once again, St. Stephen! What an amazing impact you have made on Tanzania.

With thanksgiving,
Kristin





DECEMBER BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES

The significance of baptism, Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, is “that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Your baptismal anniversary is an opportunity to light a baptismal candle and to give some prayer time to reflecting on your experiences during the past year on your journey in faith!

Pastor Jon Nelson

3	Soni York	
6	Klara Cave	
10	Sandy Brust	
19	Chuck Frey	Magnolia Sulouff
	Penelope Sulouff	Sebastian Sulouff
21	Liam Janke	
24	Ethan Jansson	
26	Ursula Recktenwald	
28	Ailene Bartlett	Sonja Cave

Others who were baptized in December:

Helen Allen Erika Geier

Were you baptized in December but your name isn't on the list above? Let us know!



FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

PRAYERS



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

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

Pray for those who will be travelling for Christmas, especially our **William & Mary students, along with all other students.** May their time away be joyous and their travels safe.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Jerry, Kay C. ,Susan, Rosa, Celeste, and Isaac, Sam Areheart, Randy Altona, Mary Anderson, Phyllis Andrews, Charles Baugh, Donald and Carol Baum, Robi Bayard, June Brantley, Carol Bergh, Mary Bloom, Doug Bolick, Kay Braman, Bob Britcher, Raymond Bunn, Cagel Family, Karin Cavanaugh, Joyce Clemens, 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, The family of Scott Hadly, Jonathan Hallman, 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, Ed Moninger, Jim Monteith, Kim Morris, Bob Myers, Jeanette Osborn, Maricel Paulin, Coral Pumley, Scott Radley, Kurt Recktenwald, Brian Ritter, Lou Schuster, Pamela Sharp, Kelsey Slay, Vasili Soultoukis, Kenneth and Laura Spencer, Chad Strausbaugh, Katlin Stark & Larry Stark, 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.



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