

***“People of Christ
Making a
Difference”***

4th Sunday in Advent

December 21, 2025

8:30 & 11:00AM

WELCOME TO ST. STEPHEN'S!

A nursery is provided for children through age 4 for both worship services and for infants and toddlers during Sunday School. The nursery is located at the end of the hall on the right side.

Children's bags can be found in the "Kid's Corner" of the narthex.

Restroom facilities are located down the hall on the left side.

First Aid, Emergency Equipment, and a wheelchair are located down the hall on the right by the stairwell.

If for any reason you must leave the sanctuary, the service is live streamed in the Agape Sunday School classroom. Any usher will be glad to direct you.

Sunday school classes are provided for 2 year olds through adults.

Listening devices and larger print bulletins are located in the narthex.
Ushers are also available to assist you.

If you are a visitor feel free to sign-in using the QR code. Here's how it works:
Point your camera at the image, tap the link that appears on your screen, and
share whatever information you desire. Thank you! Hope to see you again soon!



PRESERVICE MUSIC

"My Spirit is Joyful"
"Canzona prima a 5"
"The Rejoicing" from Royal Fireworks
"Air" from Orchestral Suite No. 3
"Sweet Songs of Christmas"

Johann S. Bach
Giovanni Gabrieli
George F. Handel
Johann S. Bach
Christopher Dedrick

GREETING, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND PEACE

PRELUDE

"And the Glory of the Lord" from Messiah

George F. Handel

(We Stand)

BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

Amen.

Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and neighbor.

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 spreading your love 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 our God. In + Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and all things are made new. Rejoice in this good news!

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

"Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"
Choir Only Stanza 2

Dan Forrest



1. Come, thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, born to
3. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a

set thy peo - ple free; _____ from our fears _____ and
child and yet _____ a king, _____ born to reign _____ in

sins re - lease _____ us; let us find our rest _____ in thee. _____
us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring. _____

_____ Is - rael's strength _____ and con - so - la - tion, hope of
_____ By thine own _____ e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in

all _____ the earth _____ thou art; dear _____ de - sire _____ of ev - 'ry
all _____ our hearts _____ a - lone; by _____ thine all _____ suf - fi - cient

na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart. _____
mer - it, raise us to _____ thy glo - rious throne. _____

(We Sit)

ADVENT WREATH CANDLELIGHTING REFLECTION

The Grace of God is coming.

Bringing salvation to all!

Paul reminds us of the importance of being called to the cause of Jesus Christ. Who are those who are set apart? Make no mistake...it is all of us! We are the family of God. The grace brought (and bought) for us in God's child, our savior, brings us to wholeness, not once a year, but 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. A baby in a manger, a child nurtured by loving parents, a youth with vision and hope, an adult with fears of the future are all welcome in God's amazing presence.

CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY

Come and experience the wonder of God's presence.

We are your family!

Our God has loved us forever without beginning or end.

Our hearts are open to receive love, peace, and healing.

Share God's love with all you meet.

We are ready to serve.

(Light the Fourth Advent Candle.)

CANDLELIGHTING HYMN *"Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel"*

ELW 257

Oh, come, blest Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

CANDLELIGHTING PRAYER

Let us pray. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. In your Son, Emmanuel, you have shown us your light and saved us from the power of sin. Bless us as we light the fourth candle on this wreath. Increase our longing for your presence, that at the celebration of your Son's birth his Spirit might dwell anew in our midst, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Music of Advent

Reading

John 1:1-9

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem

"O Come, O Come Immanuel"

Natalie Sleeth

O come, O come, Immanuel. Come now to earth and with Thy people dwell.
The world awaits from heaven a holy sign. O come and show to us the light divine.

O come, O come, Immanuel. As age to age the prophets did foretell.
Redeemer, come to save us one and all. Be born again in Bethlehem's manger stall.

For Thy coming we prepare, wisdom from on high.
Gracious Spirit, Lord most fair: now to us draw nigh.

O come, O come, Immanuel and free thy children, Israel.
Be now our hope, our comfort from above and bless us all with everlasting love.

Reading

Matthew 25:1-13

¹ "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem

"Keep Your Lamps!"

Andre Thomas

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning the time is drawing nigh.
Children don't get weary 'till your work is done. Christian journey soon be over,
the time is drawing nigh.

Reading

Isaiah 40:1-5

¹ Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³ A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem

"O Come, Divine Messiah!"

Howard Helvey

O come, divine Messiah! The world in silence waits the day
when hope shall sing its triumph and sadness flee away.
Dear Saviour haste; Come, come to earth,
dispel the night and show your face, and bid us hail the dawn of grace.

You come in peace and meekness, and lowly will your cradle be;
All clothed in human weakness shall we your Godhead see.

O Christ, whom nations sigh for, whom priest and prophet long foretold,
come break the captive fetters; Redeem the long lost fold.

Reading

Luke 1:76-79

Zechariah said about his son, John, ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. ⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem

"The Son of Mary"

Andrew Parr

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
hail, hail the word made flesh, the babe, the Son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king to own him.
The king of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

Reading

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Anthem

"Ding Dong! Merrily on High"

Hal H. Hopson

Ding dong! Merrily on high in heaven the bells are ringing.
Ding dong! Verily the sky is riven with angels singing: Gloria, hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so, here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen; and io, io, io, by priest
and people sungen! Gloria, hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you dutifully prime your matin chime, you ringers; may you beautifully rhyme
your evetime song, you singers; Gloria, hosanna in excelsis!

Closing Prayer

O Christ, your coming floods the world with light, for you are Light of light, the very radiance of the Father. Let everything that breathes praise you in song, for you are the image of the Father's glory rising upon our darkness from the Virgin's womb. O Lord, glory to you.

Amen.

(We Stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Joy to the World"

ELW 267

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,

THE 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 THE FAITHFUL

(We Sit)

OFFERING

God calls us to be generous stewards of those gifts for the sake of our ministry near and far. You can support our ministry by putting your offering in the offering plate, mailing it to the church, giving online (sslc.org or use the QR Code) or through the Givelify app. If you would like more details on direct deposit giving please contact our Parish Administrator, Mrs. Tonya Reynolds, at (803) 359-6562.



Voluntary

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Todd Marchand

(We Stand)

OFFERTORY

ELW 186



Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re - store to me the joy of
your sal - va - tion, and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

The musical notation for 'THE GREAT THANKSGIVING' consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff has two measures, the second and third have two measures each, and the fourth has two measures. The lyrics are: 'The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.', 'Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.', 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.', and 'It is right to give our thanks and praise.'

THE PREFACE

THE SANCTUS

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 musical notation for 'THE SANCTUS' consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff has two measures, the second and third have two measures each, and the fourth has two measures. The lyrics are: '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 EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

(We Sit)

THE AGNUS DEI

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

RECEPTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Christ welcomes you to this Holy Meal of the Baptized! We receive communion this morning at the center aisle. Communion will be brought to the front rows for those who wish to remain seated. Children who commune should be assisted by adults near them. Those unable to partake of wine or wheaten bread are assured of our Lord's presence in, with, and under each element alone. Gluten-free wafers are available upon request.

Communion Music *"Holy Child within the Manger"* Mark Sedio

*The Congregation is encouraged to participate in the following Communion Hymn.
The hymn can be found in the back portion of the WOV (Blue) Hymnal in your pew rack.*

Communion Hymn *"Holy Child within the Manger"* WOV 638

(We Stand)

BLESSING OF THE COMMUNICANTS

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen.

BENEDICTION

May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path, and almighty God, Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Todd Wilson/ELW 289

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song? *Refrain*

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. *Refrain*

See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above;
Mary Joseph, lend your aid, while we raise our hearts in love. *Refrain*

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare your hearts for the coming of the Messiah.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

"Joy to the World"

Jack Gale

**Thank you to all of our choir members
for sharing their gifts during today's service!**

Adult Choir Members

Sopranos

Lauralee Barrett
Julie Harper
Madison LaFontan
Johnnie Peechatka
Celeste Schnabel
Tina Stallard

Altos

Marty Davis
Donna Jackson
Cathey Klimek
Megan Paeth
Yanti Pepper
Melissa Rawl

Tenors

Mike Brittingham
Al Davis
Debbie Hester
Shawn Lackey

Basses

Eric Gilfus
Uwe Liebetrau
Stephen Lunsford
Hal McIntosh
Matt Schnabel

Sunday, December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Advent

A Meaning-Making Name

Names are powerful makers of meaning both in the scriptures and in our lives. Consider how much we associate people with their names. A name is merely a word, a sound, yet it can completely represent a person. And our names can be powerful. Think about the resurrection account in John 20 when a distraught Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus in the garden. She does not recognize him until when? He speaks her name.

The texts for the fourth Sunday of Advent invite us to explore the name “Emmanuel.” “Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). And he shall be called “Emmanuel,” God with us. This reality changes everything. Never is God so with us as in Jesus of Nazareth. Here is God-made-flesh, and in his very name, the Son of God proclaims just how with us and for us God really is. This fulfillment of prophetic promise offers us a delicate and dramatic reality: God has slipped into skin and walks among us in a totally new way, offering us life and salvation.

The Readings on This Day

Advent

Throughout Advent we acclaim that God comes, in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things. Only on this Fourth Sunday do the readings in Advent refer to the story of Jesus' birth as an arrival of God among us.

Matthew 1:18-25

Year A relies on the gospel of Matthew for many of its narratives. According to Matthew, especially the men in the Jewish tradition are called into God's plan for salvation, but in this Sunday's gospel, God's promises are present through a woman. The child born is named "Emmanuel": God is with us, in word and sacrament, today and always.

Isaiah 7:10-16

Matthew sees in Christ a fulfillment of the promises in the Hebrew Scriptures. One example is his applying the Isaiah oracle about a newborn infant to the birth of Jesus, since the Greek rendering of "young woman" suggested "virgin woman." We read Isaiah 7 on this Sunday in order to understand what Matthew wrote in chapter 1. In this reading, we stand with believers of past centuries who place their trust for salvation in God, and we recall the tradition of interpretation upon which we stand, even when our methods of interpretation are different.

Romans 1:1-7

All of Advent, all of the entire Christian year, is summed up in Paul's opening sentence. On every Sunday throughout the year, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and call one another into the obedience of faith.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God and in memory of our parents Geneva and JD Shealy and Carolyn and Paul Hartsoe by Allen and Paulette Shealy.

SERVING TODAY:

Ushers: (8:30) Eric Wessinger, Ivan Black, Pat Bowen, Bill Carroll, Aaron Rawl, Deon Fink, Vernon Hester, Blaine Richardson, and Chad Geary;

(11:00) Alon Cox, Heyward Addy, Roy Welch, Brian Paeth, Doug Harper, and Matt Martin

Instrumentalists: Noa Miller, Jason Ortiz, trumpets; Eric Gilfus, French Horn; Blake Lawson, trombone; Mathew Tuk, tuba; Matthew Jones, percussionist; Lisa Catalanotto, flutist; Frances Webb, accompanist

Greeters: (8:30) Steve and Marian Fowler; (11:00) Rick and Suzanne Swaffield

Communion Assistants: (8:30) Marty Nantz; (11:00) Bill Cegelis

Order of St. Stephen's: (8:30) [A] Ethan Kean [C] Gracen Geary; (11:00) [A] Carsyn Antley [C] Catherine Sadler

The Church Staff

Website: www.sslc.org

The Rev. Jason T. Antley

The Rev. Ralph G. Hill

Mrs. Shannon Burnett, Director of Family Life

Mrs. Tonya Reynolds, Parish Administrator

Ms. Susan Wilson, Director of Music/Organist

Mrs. Julie Tworzyanski, Preschool Director

Mrs. Sylvia Looney, Organist Emeritus

Sunday School Information:

Locations for Children's Classes

Locations for Adult Classes

Nursery – Room #105	Agape Adult Class Room #102 (Closest to Narthex)
2—4 year olds & 5K – Room #103	Saints & Sinners with PJ and PR Room #203 (Large Upstairs Room)
1st—5th Grade – Room # 216	Women Digging Deeper Parlor
6th—8th Grade – Room #212	For those not attending a Sunday School class but waiting on a child to get out of one, feel free to sit in the Social Hall!
9th—12th Grade – Room #217	If you are interested in beginning a new Sunday School class please contact Mrs. Shannon.

If you are not receiving the weekly announcements and monthly newsletter via email and would like to receive them, please email Shannon (Shannon@ssl.org) so she can add you to the distribution list.

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