

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

**Second Sunday in  
Lent**

**March 1, 2026**

**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!



## **GREETING, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND PEACE**

### **PRELUDE**

*"Canon of Joy"*  
Handbell Choir

Michele Diluzio

(We Stand)

### **BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

During the season of Lent we are called to return to the Lord with all our heart. Let us confess our sin and acknowledge before God and one another our need for repentance and God's mercy.

Holy God,

**We confess that we have strayed from you and turned aside from your way. Too often we neglect and do not trust your holy word; we take for ourselves instead of giving to others; we spoil your creation; we cause hurt; we give in to fear. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us. Create in us clean hearts for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.**

**Amen.**

Hear the good news: God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that all may receive life. This promise is for you! God embraces you, + forgives you in Christ's name, and revives you with the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

GATHERING SONG

"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"

ELW 335



1 Je - sus, keep me near the cross, there's a pre - cious foun - tain;  
 2 Near the cross, a trem - bling soul, love and mer - cy found me;  
 3 Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes be - fore me;  
 4 Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hop - ing, trust - ing ev - er,



free to all, a heal - ing stream flows from Cal - v'ry's moun - tain.  
 there the bright and morn - ing star sheds its beams a - round me.  
 help me walk from day to day with its shad - ow o'er me.  
 till I reach the gold - en strand just be - yond the riv - er.

*Refrain*



In the cross, in the cross be my glo - ry ev - er;



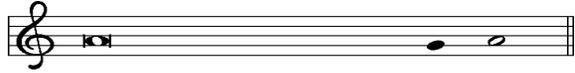
till my ran - somed soul shall find rest be - yond the riv - er.

## GREETING

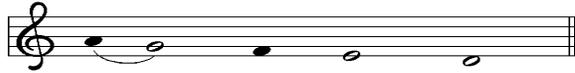
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

## THE KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



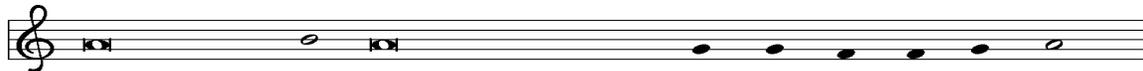
For the peace of the whole world, for the well - being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

**SALUTATION**

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

(We Sit)

**FIRST READING**

Genesis 12:1-4a

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." <sup>4a</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALMODY**

Psalm 121

**Refrain**

God will be with us all a - long our way.

God will be with us ev - 'ry night and day.

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To the hills I lift my eyes; Where shall help and strength arise?  
From the Lord will come my aid, Who all heaven and earth has made. **R**

God will guide through dangers all, On your way you will not fall;  
God who safe the people keeps Slumbers not and never sleeps. **R**

Your protector is the Lord, Shade for you God will afford;  
Neither sun nor moon shall smite, God shall guard by day and night. **R**

God will ever keep your soul, What would harm, God will control;  
In your home and by the way God will keep you day by day. **R**

**SECOND READING**

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

<sup>1</sup>What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." <sup>4</sup>Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. <sup>5</sup>But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. <sup>13</sup>For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. <sup>16</sup>For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

(We Stand)

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

**THE HOLY GOSPEL**

John 3:1-17

The holy gospel according to St. John, the 3rd chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."  
<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

(We Sit)

(11:00) Anthem	<i>"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"</i>	Traditional Spiritual
	Cherub Choir	

He's got the whole world in his hands. He's got the wind and the rain in his hands.  
He's got the tiny little baby in his hands. He's got you and me in his hands.

<i>"I am the Church"</i>	Avery and Marsh
Cherub Choir	

I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together!  
All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together.

**CHILDREN'S SERMON** Pastor Jason

**SERMON** Pastor Jason

(We Stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Blessed Assurance"

ELW 638

1 Bless-ed as-sur-ance, Je-sus is mine! Oh, what a fore-taste of glo-ry di-vine!  
 2 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, per-fect de-light, vi-sions of rap-ture now burst on my sight;  
 3 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, all is at rest; I in my Sav-ior am hap-py and blest,

Heir of sal-va-tion, pur-chase of God, born of his Spir-it, washed in his blood.  
 an-gels de-scend-ing bring from a-bove ech-oes of mer-cy, whis-pers of love.  
 watch-ing and wait-ing, look-ing a-bove, filled with his good-ness, lost in his love.

*Refrain*

This is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long:

this is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long.

## 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 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.



(8:30) Anthem

*"Prayer of St. Francis"*

Allen Pote

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love,  
Where there is injury, thy pardon, Lord. Where there is doubt, let there be faith.

Oh, Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there's despair let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, let there be light. Where there is sadness, let there be joy.

O Divine master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.  
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

Oh, Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
For it is in giving that we receive, and it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

(11:00) Voluntary

*"I Need Thee Every Hour"*

Stan Pethel

(We Stand)

OFFERTORY SONG

ELW 188

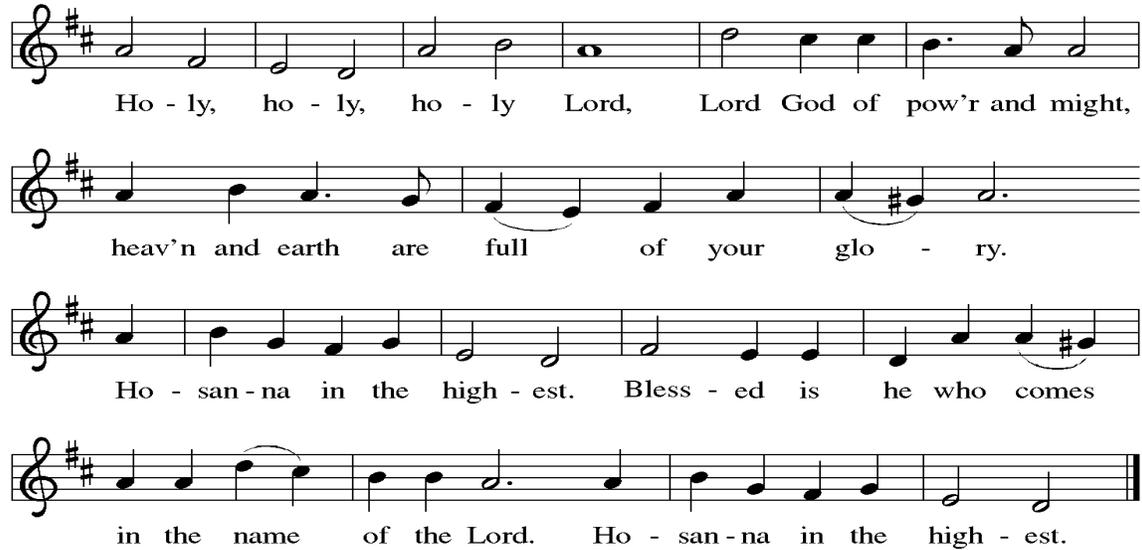
Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your  
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -  
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,  
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

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 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 EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

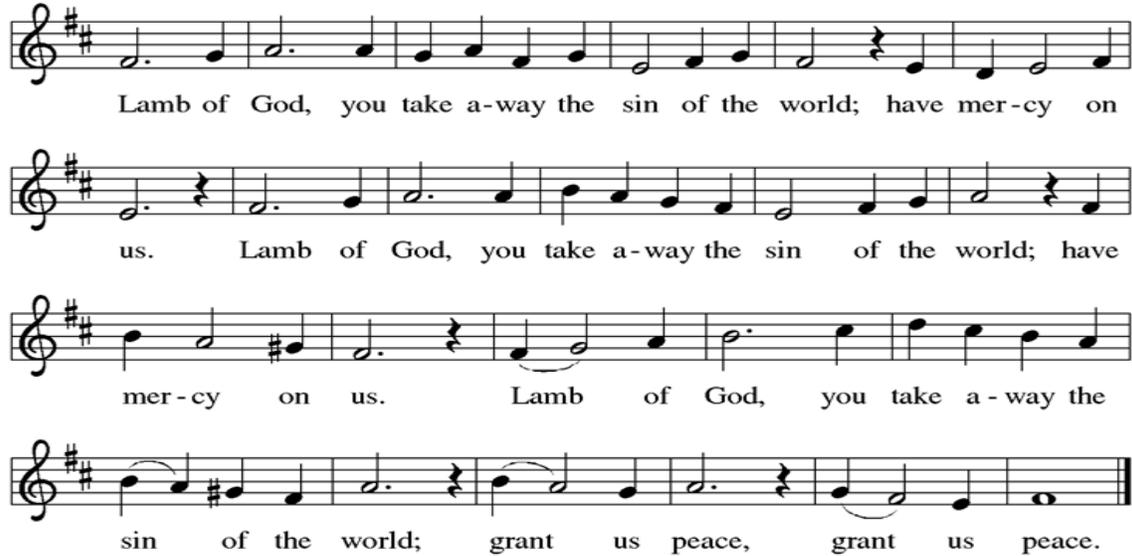
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the 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

**C**hrist welcomes you to this Holy Meal of the Baptized! We receive communion today at the altar rail. 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                      *"In the Cross of Christ I Glory"*                      Edwin T. Childs

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

Communion Hymn                      *"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"*                      LBW 482

(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

God the Father, who fills the creation with abundance, + Christ the Son, who spreads his arms in forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit, who draws ever near to us, bless you and bring you to life everlasting.

**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG**

*"Lift High the Cross"*

ELW 660

*Refrain*

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim till  
all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.

1 Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where our cap - tain trod,  
2 All new - born ser - vants of the Cru - ci - fied  
3 O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree,  
4 So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be:

*Refrain*

our king vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.  
bear on their brows the seal of him who died.  
as thou hast prom - ised, draw us all to thee.  
praise to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry!

**DISMISSAL**

Marked with the cross of Christ, go forth to love and serve the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**POSTLUDE**

*"Lift High the Cross"*

Paul Manz

# **Sunday, March 1, 2026**

## **Second Sunday in Lent**

### **Questions Come to Light**

What is it about the night that invites questions? As our head rests on the pillow and shadows stretch out on the bedroom wall, questions, like field mice, begin to emerge from the nooks and crannies of our mind. At first, the questions are utilitarian: Did someone let the dog out this evening? Are the kids' lunches packed for school? When am I going to get to the grocery store this week? And then, without warning, the questions morph: Is Grandma going to recover from this illness? Why are my prayers so short these days? Does Jesus really care about us—about me? At this point we know that night has truly descended. Truth uttered in darkness. Naked honesty feels much safer, much less exposed when light's reach seems a day way.

Maybe that is why we can relate to Nicodemus. For when did Nicodemus come to Jesus? By night! Though we can easily skip over the setting's description in this gospel encounter, it is so very important. With shadows dancing in the torchlight, Nicodemus makes his way to Jesus, beset by questions he can ask only under cover of darkness. Though the darkness is Nicodemus' security blanket, he cannot help himself. Like a moth fluttering in the night sky, Nicodemus is irresistibly drawn to the light. Not just any light: Jesus, the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. As people filled with our own questions, we follow in the furtive footsteps of Nicodemus, falsely believing our naked honesty will remain hidden in the gloom of night. But the Spirit, through the light of Christ, calls us out from the shadows, and in fact, exposes us to the brilliance of God's love—a love that meets our questioning hearts with nothing less than life eternal.

## **The Readings on This Day**

Those who designed the three-year lectionary anticipated that the church of the future will resemble the church of the fourth century, more than that of the nineteenth. In the fourth century, Lent was understood as the time for catechumens to prepare for baptism at Easter, and baptismal preparation included meditation on the Johannine discourses about the meaning of Christ for the baptized community. Thus Lent in Year A revives the pattern of proclaiming the Johannine signs and discourses as a way to interpret baptism and the new life of the resurrection. This Sunday begins with the first of four: Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

### **John 3:1-17**

The four Lenten Johannine discourses begin with Jesus' teaching about being born again. Until the nineteenth century, the church understood "being born again" as referring to baptism. In Lent, catechumens are prepared for Easter baptism, and the community, as Martin Luther says, daily crawls back to the font, to be renewed in the promises of this second birth.

### **Genesis 12:1-4a**

As with many of the lectionary's first readings, Genesis 12 is chosen to parallel the gospel reading. Jesus calls on Nicodemus to be born again, and in parallel, we recall the story of the Lord calling Abram to begin a new life in a new land in the sight of God.

### **Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

As is usual with the second readings for about half of the church year, this second reading is chosen to coordinate with the first reading and the gospel. Romans is seen as particularly appropriate for Lent; thus four of the Lenten epistle readings come from Romans. On this Sunday, Paul's commentary on Abraham presents the Christian interpretation of the call of Abram: God blessed Abraham, not because he obeyed the Jewish law, but because he had faith in the promises of God, the same faith into which Nicodemus and all the baptized are invited.

**ALTAR GREENERY** is given to the glory of God and in celebration of Mrs. Marian's birthday (March 2) by Steve Fowler.

**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

**Cantor:** Madison LaFontan

**Soloist:** Tina Stallard

**Trumpeter:** Jack Jebaily

**Ringers:** Jennifer Taylor, Lucy Austin, Renee Mills, Cathy Mathias, Carol Lunsford, Patricia Masek, Shawn Lackey, and Alaina Wenzel

**Greeters:** (8:30) Sandy Shealy; (11:00) Chuck and Dawn Corley

**Lay Readers:** (8:30) Vernon Hester; (11:00) Shannon Burnett

**Communion Assistants:** (8:30) Marty and Jim Nantz; (11:00) Cathy Mathias and Myra Strock

**Order of St. Stephen's:** (8:30) [A] Gracen Geary [C] Connor Geary;  
 (11:00) [A] Eli Maxheimer [C] Aaron Cegelis

**The Church Staff**

**Website: [www.sslc.org](http://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**

<b>Nursery</b> – Room #105	<b>Agape Adult Class</b> Room #102 (Closest to Narthex)
<b>2—4 year olds &amp; 5K</b> – Room #103	<b>Saints &amp; Sinners with PJ and PR</b> Room #203 (Large Upstairs Room)
<b>1<sup>st</sup>—5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b> – Room # 216	<b>Women Digging Deeper</b> Parlor
<b>6<sup>th</sup>—8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b> – 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!
<b>9<sup>th</sup>—12<sup>th</sup> Grade</b> – 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@sslc.org](mailto:Shannon@sslc.org)) so she can add you to the distribution list.

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