

St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025



An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:20

We serve God through caring and compassionate service.

The Service

The Prelude

Ringing of the Bells

Isabelle C

(Ringing of the Bells is used to symbolize waiting and anticipation for the coming of Christ. The ringing of the bells serve as a reminder of the spiritual practice of waiting, reflecting on the themes of hope and the anticipation of the birth of Jesus)

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: We are always looking for evidence that God is with us. That sign is in the One to come--the One that God is sending. We want to know for sure that everything is in God's care. And so we cry to the heavens in our distress. Our cries are heard! God is responding in love and hope. Let us come before God with expectant hearts and spirits! Let us be ready to receive the blessed gift of the Savior.

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

The Caylor Family

“Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah”

**Text: Wayne L Wold, b 1954
Music: Yiddish folk tune
Text © 1984 Fortress Press**

TTE TN VELDELE

4. Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness. He is coming, tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining!

***The Brief Order for Confession & Forgiveness**

P: In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **C: Amen.**

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Most merciful God,

C: we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. **Amen.**

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. Through the Holy Spirit, God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of \pm Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **C: Amen.**

***The Gathering Hymn “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”**

Text: Psalterium Cantiunum Catholicarum, KÖLN, 1710; tr John M Neale, 1818-1866, alt

Music: French processional, 15th cent

VENI, EMMANUEL

**1. Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive
Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of
God appear.**

**Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O
Israel.**

**2. Oh, come, Oh come, great Lord of might, who to your
tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times once gave the
law in cloud, and majesty, and awe.** **Refrain:**

**3. Oh, come, strong Branch of Jesse, free your own from
Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell your people save
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.** Refrain:

**4. 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.** Refrain:

**5. Oh, come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our
heav'nly home; make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.** Refrain:

***The Greeting**

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

C: And also with you.

***The Kyrie**

L: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

L: For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

L: 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.

C: Lord, have mercy.

L: For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

L: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord

C: Amen.

***The Hymn of Praise**

L: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia.

C: Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and blessing and glory are his. This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia.

Sing with all the people of God and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor and glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. This is the feast of victory for our God, for the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. Alleluia.

The assembly shall be seated.

The Prayer of the Day

Peg G

L: Let us pray,

C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The Children's Meditation

Dena T

The First Reading

Malachi 3:1-5(NRSVue)

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like washers' soap;³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings

to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

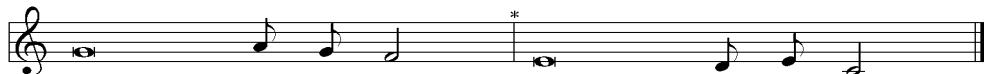
⁵ Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

intoned responsively



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

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

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

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

⁵ You have fed them with the | bread of tears;*
 you have given them bowls of | tears to drink.

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

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

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

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

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

The Second Reading

Romans 1:1-7(NRSVue)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The assembly shall stand.

***The Gospel Acclamation**

C: Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

***The Holy Gospel**

Matthew 1:18-25(NRSVue)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah^[f] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her

husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly.²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.”²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

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

The assembly shall be seated.

The Sermon “I’ve Got Good News and Bad News”
Pastor Dan Sutherin

The Hymn of the Day “Savior of the Nations, Come”

*Text: attr Ambrose of Milan, 340-397; Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr hymnal version NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND
Music: J. Walter, Geistliche Gesangbüchlein, 1524
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress*

- 1. Savior of the nations, come; virgin’s son, make here your home. Marvel now, O heav’n and earth: God has chosen such a birth.**
- 2. Not by human flesh and blood, but the mystic Breath of God, was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of woman, blossom fresh.**
- 3. Wondrous birth—oh, wondrous child—from his throne, a virgin mild! Very God, and Mary’s son, eager now his race to run!**

- 4. From God's heart the Savior speeds, back to God his pathway leads; out to vanquish death's command, back to reign at God's right hand.**
- 5. Now your manger, shining bright, hallows night with newborn light. Night cannot this light subdue; let our faith shine ever new.**
- 6. Praise we wing to Christ the Lord, virgin's son, incarnate Word! To the holy Trinity praise we sing eternally!**

The assembly shall stand.

***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.

***The Prayers of Intercession**

Peg G

L: In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are

anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill especially Scott's great aunt, Raynaud's family, Shukti's grandson, Deb, Jody, Tony, Joyce, Cathy H, Frank, Leroy, Wendy, Tori, Yvonne, John, Donna, Peggy H, Stephanie, Anita, Michelle, Ann, Genie, Wally, Troy, Anne, Cathy, Chyrstal, Vivian. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of patience, we pray for that patience as we continue in the search for a Pastor to lead us. Guide the synod staff as they select possible candidates for our call process. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen.**

***The Peace of the Lord**

L: The Peace of the Lord be with you!

C: And also with you!

*The People may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.
The assembly shall be seated.*

The Offering

The assembly shall stand.

***The Offertory**

C: Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing. Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gather

the hopes and dreams of all; unite them with the prayers we offer. Grace our table with your presence, and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.

***The Offertory Prayer**

L: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come.

C: Amen.

***The Great Thanksgiving**

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heavens, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**C: Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might;
Heav'n and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest**

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached

out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

***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.****

The assembly shall be seated

The Lamb of God

**C: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
Have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us peace, grant us peace.**

The Distribution

The assembly shall stand.

*P: The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

***The Canticle**

**C: Thankful hearts and voices raise; tell ev'ryone what God
has done. Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and bear
Christ's holy name. Send us with your promises and
lead your people forth in joy with shouts of
thanksgiving. Alleluia. Alleluia.**

***The Prayer**

L: Let us pray,

**C: 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.**

***The Sending Hymn "My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness"**

Text: With One Voice, 1995, based on the Magnificat

KINGSFOLD

Music: English folk tune; arr Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958

Arr © Oxford University Press

**1. My soul proclaims your greatness, Lord; I sing my
Savior's praise! You looked upon my lowliness, and I
am full of grace. Now ev'ry land and ev'ry age this
blessing shall proclaim—great wonders you have done
for me, and holy is your name.**

2. To all who live in holy fear your mercy ever flows. With mighty arm you dash the proud, their scheming hearts expose. The ruthless you have cast aside, the lowly throned instead; the hungry filled with all good things, the rich sent off unfed.

3. To Israel, your servant blest, your help is ever sure; the promise to our parents made their children will secure. Sing glory to the Holy One, give honor to the Word, and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, One God, by all adored.

*The candles are extinguished.
The assembly shall be seated.*

The Announcements

The Assembly shall stand.

***The Benediction and Dismissal**

P: 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.

C: Amen.

P: Go in peace. Keep awake and serve others with care and compassion.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Postlude

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December 21, 2025

Welcome to St. Stephen's! We are glad you have joined us for worship. **In case of emergency ministerial care, please contact Tom Stempson, Phone #317-374-8708, email: stempson@att.net.** We have been blessed to worship alongside you and hope to see you again soon!

All Who Profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and acknowledge His Presence within the bread and wine of Holy Communion are welcome to receive the Sacrament.

We welcome Pastor Dan Sutherin presiding and presenting the sermon this morning. Thank you for sharing your message with us.

Prayer Requests...

Tom & Shirley – Doug, terminal cancer; John; Peggy H, brain tumor.

Holly E – Deb, lung cancer recurred; Anita, bone cancer; Anne, kidney transplant.

Jim & Dena T – daughter Jody, health issues; Leroy, health.

Tony M – relief from pain and healing.

Kay W – stepdaughter Joyce, ICU Methodist Hosp.

Member of Sewing Group – Cathy H, entering hospice.

Genie & Wally R – brother Frank, multiple surgeries; Genie, health; Wally, back.

Shukti S - grandson

Wendy B – gainful employment.

Pastor Bob & Sally –Yvonne, broken ribs & hip.

Jim B – wife Donna, recovering from a liver transplant.

Raynaud C – family in Haiti.

Dave & Beth – Troy, broken back.

Lois B – son John, Ohio, recovery from hip surgery.

Scott C – great aunt, broken hip.

Patti W – sister Deb diagnosed with PSP.

Tori A – recovery surgery; Stephanie, heart surgery; Michelle, infection.

Phyllis H – daughter Cathy, granddaughter Chrystal.

Izzy L – friend, Vivian, health.

Please join us this Wednesday evening when we celebrate the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. At 7:30 pm we will have a service of Lessons and Carols, Holy Communion, and special music provided by the Brass Quintet. We hope you will come and praise the New-Born King!

Up-coming Events:

Wed., Dec. 24 7:30 pm Candlelight Christmas Holy Communion Service

Thurs., Dec. 25 **CHRISTMAS DAY! BLESSING TO ALL!**

Sun. Dec. 28 10:00 am Worship Service

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14 - There are children activity bags in a basket in the Narthex for children, of various ages, to use during church. The children's bulletin follows the Lectionary for each week and the children can take it home. At the end of the service, please return the bags to the basket.

Volunteers are always needed to make our services a fellowship of community. Please take time to check the sign-up sheet posted on the black bulletin board for opportunities to serve. **Volunteers are needed to help with Fellowship.** If you can supply the food and snacks on a Sunday, please sign up on the list in the Fellowship Hall. Monetary donations are welcome, too. If you have questions, please see Gloria Kocher.

Current giving income received in the month of November was \$6,870.60. Amount needed each month per 2026 budget is \$9,583.00. If you'd like to make your offering online so you don't have to deal with checks and envelopes, go to ststephensplainfield.org and click on the Online Offering tab. Thank you.



Please fill out the yellow cards and place them in the offering plate. The cards allow us to track attendance and follow up with visitors. For members, your name and date, along with any prayer requests will suffice. For visitors, please provide your contact information so we can send you a follow-up email or text.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY: This month our pantry is **Saturday, January 24.** Pantry set-up will be **Friday, January 23.** We know it's a lot to ask, but please consider giving some time to this important mission. Remember us when you shop or during your regular giving. We've been so 8-20successful with this mission only because of your loyalty. God Bless.

Preparing for Next Week: **Monday** Revelation 22:6-7,18-20 **Tuesday** Luke 1:46b-55 **Wednesday** **Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve** Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14,[15-20] **Thursday** **Christmas Day** Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:[1-7] **Friday** Acts 7:59—8:8 **Saturday** Psalm 148 **First Sunday of Christmas:** Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23