

# Staying Connected

*Always Connected to God, Each Other and the World*

## Current Worship Opportunities during COVID-19 Pandemic

### SUNDAYS 9:30 AM Worship Options

**In person in Sanctuary** – This option is no longer available per our Safety Committee. We will revisit this possibility in January. Thank you for your patience!

**Online** Live streamed on St. Stephen's Face Book

**From your car** in either parking lot. Broadcasted via 87.9 FM / Communion brought to car

### WEDNESDAYS 6:30 PM Online "The Well" St. Stephen's Face Book

### WEEKDAYS Varying times Channel 16—Comcast (Sunday 9:30 am Service Recorded)



## Welcome to the season of *Advent* ...

Advent is the first season of the new church year, and means "coming" in Latin. We mark this time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas) and the anticipation of the return of Christ at the Second Coming. Our worship focuses on four traditional themes in advent including God's people (**hope**), the Old Testament prophets (**peace**), John the Baptist (**love**) and Mary, the mother of Jesus (**joy**). You see the church is decorated and adorned in the color of Royal Blue, a symbol of looking forward to welcoming the coming of The King.

In this year of COVID-19, we reflect, lament and prepare for Christ's coming. We still our hearts and minds, and move from hope, to peace, love and finally joy, acknowledging and celebrating that Christ has come, Christ is here among us, and Christ will come again.

Within our worship here at St Stephen's during this season, we have selected music and text that focus on the four themes of Advent. Our consistent use of the hymns *My Lord What a Morning*, *Lost in the Night*, *Come Now O Prince of Peace*, and *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* calls out in a world of turmoil and harkens to the knowledge that **Christ has come, Christ is here, Christ WILL come again wrapped in the traditional themes of hope, peace, love and joy of the Advent season. In our prayers and in our song we call out "Come Lord Jesus, Quickly Come."**

-Byron Dockter, Director of Worship



## REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

**What's an Advent calendar?** It's a special calendar that is used to count down the days of Advent in anticipation of Christmas. Usually each day a flap is opened on the calendar to reveal a gift or prize.

**A reverse Advent calendar** is simply the opposite. Each day you gather an item to be given away.

Please join our Faith Formation students using a reverse Advent calendar to celebrate the anticipation of Christ's birth by preparing a box of food items to be donated to the Neighbor's Inc. Food Shelf. **Collection will be Christmas Eve**—drop off point: **St. Stephen's Manger**. Here's how to do it, find an empty box then each day in December add an item to your box. Here's a suggested item list:

December 1—Box of cereal	December 13—Canned beans
December 2—Peanut butter	December 14—Box of crackers
December 3—Stuffing mix	December 15—Package of rice
December 4—Boxed potatoes	December 16—Oatmeal
December 5—Mac & Cheese	December 17—Pasta
December 6—Canned fruit	December 18—Spaghetti sauce
December 7—Canned tomatoes	December 19—Chicken soup
December 8—Canned tuna	December 20—Tomato soup
December 9—Dessert mix	December 21—Canned stew
December 10—Applesauce	December 22—Canned chicken
December 11—Can of veggies	December 23—Granola bars
December 12—Pancake Mix	December 24—Canned fruit

On Christmas Eve—bring your completed box to St Stephen's and leave at the manger in the Charlton parking lot. We'll get it to the Neighbor's Food Shelf for you. Bless your neighbors this Christmas holiday! **(Join us at 3:30, 4:00 or 4:30pm for a reading outside by the manger of the Christmas story as written in Luke 2.)**

## Order your Christmas poinsettia plant now.

The plants will be used to decorate the Sanctuary for the Christmas services which this year will be pre-recorded. **Plants can be taken home Dec. 21-23.** To order: go **online** to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0945ADA822AAFB6-christmas>, **download order form** from our website <https://www.ststephenswsp.org/worshipservicebulletins.cfm> or **call the church office 651-457-6541**. **Live links can be found in weekly broadcasted resource email.** **Please Note: Don't forget to sign up for Sunday Altar flowers for 2021**—the signup genius has been updated and ready for sponsors. If you have a specific date in mind you can always call the Church office to sign up.



**Christmas IS happening at St Stephen's this year just a bit differently due to COVID-19.**

## CHRISTMAS Eve—December 24

We welcome the light of the Christ child in a **traditional candlelight Worship Service pre-recorded airing at 3PM on St Stephen's Facebook page**. Service will include your favorite Christmas carols like "O Come, All Ye Faithful", "Hark the Herald Angels Sing", "Away in the Manger" and "Silent Night, Holy Night". Prepare your hearts for Christmas day as we celebrate the Incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now.



### 3-5pm "Come to the Manger" hear the word—

We invite you to gather and celebrate as the community of Christ, following the COVID-19 protocols of masks and social distancing, **at the St Stephen's manger in the Charlton parking Lot**. We will be reading the Luke Christmas story on the half hours: **3:30pm, 4:00pm and 4:30pm**. This is an excellent time to bring your Advent Christmas box of food and leave at the Manger.



## CHRISTMAS Day—December 25

O come, let us adore him! The Christmas morning **Worship Service will be pre-recorded airing at 8AM on St Stephen's Facebook page**. We hope you include this as part of your Christmas Day celebrations! God's peace and blessings to all—share the Good News!

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services will **NOT** be broadcasted either day in our parking lots. It will only be available on our Facebook page. God's blessings to all!



## Always CONNECTED

TO GOD, EACH OTHER AND THE WORLD

Your faithfulness is **inspiring**. As of Sunday afternoon 11/29 we had over 63 Intentions returned. WOW!

If you have not done so, please remember to return your Intention for 2021. *Will you help release the \$20,000 special gift by submitting your Intention?* (Update: we shared the wrong number with you initially, we actually need 115 intentions returned.) Thank you for showing your support of our ministries.

### Always Connected with Safety in Mind

Our Safety Committee has been asked to clarify our process. The meetings are hard work as opinions and information and needs are shared, discussed and agreed to. This is brand new for everyone! **We believe the decision we arrived at to stop in-person worship was made in accordance with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Governor's recent message to "dial back" our activities.** In a nutshell to *"stay in your household and do not gather."* We believe this is a faithful response to the rising number of cases and the critical lack of life-saving hospital resources. **We know how meaningful in-person worship is and constantly monitor the situation looking for the time to re-open.** Please keep the Safety Committee (Merrill Zieman, Gary Westman, Roberta Meyers, Brenda and John Gieser, Lynn Kubat and Pastor John) in your thoughts and prayers as they seek to be faithful in these difficult times.

### **Loaves and Fishes**

Thanks to all who responded to our call to raise funds for our Loaves and Fishes program serving our neighbors in the community.

**No Hugs during COVID—**however, you can reach out to our Community—specifically the kids at Garlough Environmental Magnet School down the block from the church—with a **virtual hug** by providing a new winter coat and other winter wear like snow pants, hats, mittens and scarves. COVID-19 has impacted many families. Some of these families were already struggling to make ends meet. **How can you help?** **Drop off new winter wear** at the church between 9-3pm during the week, we will see that it is brought to Garlough for distribution. During these times of COVID we ask that only newly purchased items be brought in. The children attending Garlough are in grades K-4. Thank you! St Stephen's Mission Committee.



ST STEPHEN'S  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Connecting to God, each other and the world

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**Thank You for your Support of our St. Stephen's Ministries ♥**

By Mail | Online thru St Stephen's website | GIVE+Text (Text 844-907-2702) | GivePlus Vanco Mobile App

**PLEASE NOTE:** Links included in the eUpdate are not active—watch for a separate email that contains resources available and active links all in one handy document.