

# ***St. Stephen Lutheran Church***

***West & East Bay, Central Valley, and Southern California***

Member congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (clclutheran.org)

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**December 15, 2024 † Advent 3**

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**We Welcome Our Visitors** who are with us this morning.

We hope that you are uplifted by the Gospel at our worship service.

We invite you to join us every Sunday. Please sign our guestbook in the entry.

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† Preparation for Worship: Read Psalm 22 (Lutheran Service Book or Pew Bible) †

**Our Worship Services will be Posted to Our Website Each Sunday Evening.  
To Watch our Worship Service Online Please Click This Link:**

**<https://www.sslcwest.org/worship.html>**



## Opening Hymn: 343 Prepare the Royal Highway

LSB 343



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; The King of kings is near!  
2 God's peo - ple, see Him com - ing: Your own e - ter - nal king!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen To greet your prom - ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; It comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley A lev - el road ap - pear!  
Palm branch-es strew be - fore Him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion Its trib - ute too should bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom And jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of Glo - ry Fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
All lands, bow down be - fore Him! All na - tions, now a - dore Him!  
So let your praise be sound - ing For kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, For He ful - fills God's Word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, alt.

Tune: Swedish, 17th cent.

Text: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 130003862

Tune: Public domain

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

(Worship Supplement, p. 12)

### **Invocation**

*We invoke ("call upon") the name of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

**P** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

### **Confession and Absolution**

*We come before our Holy God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.*

**P** We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve Him as His dear children. But we have disobeyed Him and deserve only His wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Him and plead for His mercy.

**C** **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against You and do not deserve to be called Your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy upon me according to Your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin and take away my guilt.**

**P** God our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has removed your guilt forever. Through faith in Him, which was created in you by the Holy Spirit, you are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will.

**C** Amen.

**Kyrie** *Latin for "O Lord." We approach our Lord with a cry for help in all the needs of our earthly life.* W.S. p. 13

**♪ Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Lord have mercy on us.**

**Gloria in Excelsis** *Latin for "Glory to God in the highest."* W.S. p. 13

**♪ Glory to God, we give You thanks and praise;  
Of heav'nly joy and peace on earth we sing.  
We worship You, to You our hearts we raise,  
Lord God, almighty Father, heav'nly King.**

***Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's only Son,  
You bore for us the load of this world's sin.  
O Lamb of God, Your glorious vict'ry won,  
Receive our prayer, grant us Your peace within.***

***Alone, O Christ, You only are the Lord,  
At God's right hand in majesty most high:  
Who with the Spirit worshiped and adored,  
With all the heav'nly host we glorify.***

## **Prayer of the Day**

**P** We pray:

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of Your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts and fill us with Your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## **First Reading**

**Zephaniah 3:14-18 (NKJV)**

***<sup>14</sup> Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup> The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more. <sup>16</sup> In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. <sup>17</sup> The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." <sup>18</sup> "I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, Who are among you, To whom its reproach is a burden.***

## **Second Reading**

**Luke 3:7-18 (NKJV)**

**P** The second reading is from Luke 3:7-18

**C** Sanctify us by Your truth, O LORD. Your Word is truth!

**<sup>7</sup> Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of**

**vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. <sup>9</sup> "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." <sup>10</sup> So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" <sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" <sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." <sup>14</sup> Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." <sup>15</sup> Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, <sup>16</sup> John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." <sup>18</sup> And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.**

**P** Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it!

## **Alleluia and Verse**

*When God speaks to us in His Word it is natural for us to respond. We sing "Allelujah!"—meaning, "Praise the Lord!"*

**♪ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**These words are written that we may believe**  
**That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Apostles' Creed** *We boldly confess what we believe.*

*W.S. p. 15*

**C** I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,**

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy Christian Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

### Hymn of the Day: 335 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

LSB 335



1 O bride of Christ, re - joice; Ex - ul - tant raise thy voice  
2 Let shouts of glad - ness rise Tri - um - phant to the skies.  
3 A hum - ble beast He rides, Yet as a King pre - sides;  
4 The weak and tim - id find How meek He is and kind;  
5 Then go thy Lord to meet; Strew palm leaves at His feet;



To hail the day of glo - ry Fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.  
Now comes the King most glo - rious To reign o'er all vic - to - rious.  
Though not ar - rayed in splen - dor, He makes the grave sur - ren - der.  
To them He gives a trea - sure Of bliss be - yond all mea - sure.  
Thy gar - ments spread be - fore Him And hon - or and a - dore Him.



*Refrain*  
Ho - san - na, praise, and glo - ry! Our King, we bow be - fore Thee.

Text: Danish, c. 1600; tr. Victor O. Petersen, 1864–1929, alt.

Tune: Der Bussfertige Sünder, 1679, Nürnberg

Text and tune: Public domain

**Sermon Text: Philippians 4:4-7** <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NJKV)

**Sermon Theme: The Christmas Gift of God that Keeps on Giving Joy**

### Offertory

W.S. p. 16

♪ **Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from Your presence,  
Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.  
Uphold with Your Spirit free.**

**Offering** *We offer our gifts to the Lord, remembering that He has first given to us that we might have to give to Him.*  
(† *If you have an offering to give today, please place it in the plate in the church entryway.* †)

### **Sermon Hymn: 897 O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly**

LSB 897



1 O re - joice, ye Chris - tians, loud - ly, For our joy has  
2 See, my soul, thy Sav - ior choos - es Weak - ness here and  
3 Lord, how shall I thank Thee right - ly? I ac - knowl - edge  
4 Je - sus, guard and guide Thy mem - bers, Fill them with Thy



now be - gun; Won - drous things our God has done.  
 pov - er - ty; In such love He comes to thee.  
 that by Thee I am saved e - ter - nal - ly.  
 bound-less grace, Hear their prayers in ev - 'ry place.



Tell a - broad His good - ness proud - ly, Who our race has  
 Nei - ther crib nor cross re - fus - es; All He suf - fers  
 Let me not for - get it light - ly, But to Thee at  
 Fan to flame faith's glow - ing em - bers; Grant all Chris - tians,



hon - ored thus, That He deigns to dwell with us.  
 for thy good To re - deem thee by His blood.  
 all times cleave And my heart true peace re - ceive.  
 far and near, Ho - ly peace, a glad new year!

*Refrain*



Joy, O joy, be - yond all glad - ness, Christ has done a -



way with sad - ness! Hence, all sor - row and re - pin - ing,



For the Sun of Grace is shin - ing!

Text: Christian Keimann, 1607–62; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.

Tune: Andreas Hammerschmidt, c. 1611–1675

Text and tune: Public domain

**General Prayer** *We bring our prayers to God.*



## Lord's Prayer

- C** 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.

**Benediction** *The blessing given by God for the blessing of His people (Numbers 6:24-26).*

- P** The LORD bless you and keep you.  
The LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.  
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.



**C** A-men, a-men, a - men.

## Closing Hymn: 377 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing LSB 377



1 On Christ-mas night all Chris - tians sing To hear the news the  
2 Then why should men on earth be so sad, Since our Re - deem - er  
3 When sin de - parts be - fore His grace, Then life and health come  
4 All out of dark-ness we have light, Which made the an - gels



an - gels bring, On Christ - mas night all Chris - tians sing To  
made us glad, Then why should men on earth be so sad, Since  
in its place, When sin de - parts be - fore His grace, Then  
sing this night, All out of dark - ness we have light, Which



hear the news the an - gels bring, News of great joy, news of great  
 our Re - deem - er made us glad, When from our sin He set us  
 life and health come in its place; An - gels and men with joy may  
 made the an - gels sing this night: "Glo - ry to God and peace to



mirth, News of our mer - ci - ful King's birth.  
 free, All for to gain our lib - er - ty?  
 sing, All for to see the new - born King.  
 men Now and for - ev - er - more. A - men."

Text and tune: English

Text and tune: Public domain

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today           **10:00 a.m. Worship Service**  
                      **11:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal**  
                      **11:15 a.m. Children Christmas Eve Practice**

Next Sunday: **10:00 a.m. Worship Service**  
 12/22/24       **11:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal**  
                      **11:15 a.m. Children Christmas Eve Practice**

**Upcoming:**  
 Tuesday       **5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Children's Service**  
 12/24/24  
 Wednesday   **10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship Service**  
 12/25/24  
 Wednesday   **10:00 a.m. New Year's Day Service**  
 1/1/25

**The Christmas Eve Offering** has been designated for two causes and will be divided up 50-50. Half of the offerings will be going to CLC's Mission Development Fund (MDF) and the other half to the Community Services Agency in Mountain View.

**The Food Pantry Box** has been set out in the entryway to place non-perishable food items in. These donations will be given to the local food pantry of the Community Services Agency in Mountain View.

## **CHRIST IS CHRISTMAS**

(Bible Passages compiled by Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer)

What is Christmas as the world celebrates it without Christ? What is \_\_\_mas? Observance of Christmas without Christ is an excuse for a party. It is a charade. The true spirit and meaning of Christmas is understood and meaningful only if it translates to confidence of faith in the living Word, Christ Jesus "through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by [the] gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (John 18:37)

### ***Christ was Prophesied***

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). [1 John 3:5-8]

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5-6). [1 Corinthians 1:30-31]

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear..." (Deuteronomy 18:15). [Acts 3:22]

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). [Matthew 1:1,6]

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and

bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). [Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:26-31]

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2). [Luke 2:6-7, 2:11]

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). [Ephesians 2:13-14]

### **Christ Came**

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:5-8)

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

"For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'" (Acts 3:22)

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham... Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king..." (Matthew 1:1-6).

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" ... Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you

will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:26-31).

"So it was, that while they were there [Bethlehem], the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:6-7).

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

"So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15)

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace..." (Ephesians 2:13-14).

### ***Christ is With Us***

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,14).

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Matthew 1:23

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1: 24-25).

"...And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

"And the Lord, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

“But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God...” (Isaiah 41:1-3).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (Romans 8:31-35)?

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

### ***Christ is Coming Again***

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-2).

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son...” (John 5:21-22).

"Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness..." (2 Peter 3:8-11).

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...' (Matthew 25:31-34).

Here then is the meaning and beauty of Christmas to all Who understand it: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:11-13).

## CLC Financial Report - November 2024

Operating Funds	Balance 7/1/2024	YTD Revenue	YTD Disbursed	Budget 5 Months	Balance 11/30/2024
General Fund	0	411,204	522,621	547,075	(111,417)
ILC Operations (incl. CLC subsidy)	0	742,673	695,794	718,375	46,879
<b>Auxiliary Funds</b>					
ILC Improvement Fund (IIF)	110,979	16,450	53,954		73,475
ILC Building Projects	1,560,282	279,410	0		1,839,692
Mission Development Fund (MDF)	120,784	81,518	63,274		139,028
Kinship	169,884	60,010	80,529		149,365
Church Extension Fund (CEF)	2,684,208	310,381	56,123		2,938,466
Student Aid Fund (SAF)	117,317	39,479	84,484		72,312
EduK8 Fund	47,692	16,748	0		64,440
Reserve Fund	79,964	77,511	0		157,475
<b>Auxiliary Funds Totals</b>	<b>\$4,891,110</b>	<b>\$881,507</b>	<b>\$338,364</b>		<b>\$5,434,253</b>

**General Fund** – In the month of November we spent about \$12,000 more than we received in contributions. This increased the deficit in the fund to just over of \$111,000 compared to a year ago when it we had a deficit of about \$34,000. Contributions through November are down about \$53,000 from last year at this time.

**ILC Operations** – Revenue is up about \$38,000 over the same period as last year while disbursements are up about \$22,000.

**ILC Building Projects** – Year-to-date contributions have been about \$157,000 with the remaining revenue of around \$122,000 a result of increases in the market value of the investments

**Church Extension Fund** – Year to date revenue consists of payments received of almost \$114,000 from congregations on the loans they owe the CLC, about \$195,000 of increases in the market value of the investments and just under \$1,000 of contributions to the fund.

**Other Auxiliary Funds** – The activity in the other funds in the table above is similar to the activity in the same period a year ago.

*Stephen R. Lentz, CLC Treasurer*

*Thomas J. Lentz, Chairman, CLC Board of Trustees*