

**Connecting People with Jesus...
In Us... Among Us... Through Us**



ST. STEPHENS

LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

2304 Springs Road NE
Hickory, NC 28601

Church: 828-256-9865
www.sslcms.org

School: 828-256-2166
www.sslswarriors.org

St. Stephens Staff

David Ziehr, Pastor + Shea Pennington, Pastor
David Guelzow, Visitation Pastor + Tristan Jones, Vicar
Ross Chiles, Principal + Randall Cline, Youth Ministry
Donna Lee, Children's Ministry + Brandon Buff, Facilities and Technology
Robert Smith, Traditional Music Director + David Day, Praise Team Director
Jadi Gurganious, Mission Facilitator + Savannah Lee, Communication Coordinator
Sharon Maynor, Administrator + Tashia Fisher, Church Administrative Asst.
Debbi Becker, School Administrative Asst.
Tiffany Sigmon, Receptionist & Visitor Engagement Coordinator
Kristy Smith, New Member Coordinator

Epiphany

January 3 & 4. 2026

Welcome to Worship

We pray you will find the presence of God in our worship. We ask that all of our members and all guest to please print your name in the book passed along the pew before the offering. Guest, we encourage you to fill out a Connect Card also.

Holy Communion: We welcome all who have been instructed in the faith, who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and in the true presence of His body and blood in the sacrament. If you are a guest today and would like to participate in the Sacrament, please consult a pastor or elder beforehand with any questions. **We do offer white grape juice and gluten free bread for those who need it.**

Children are welcome in our worship services. As an alternative, a nursery for infants through 2 years old is available in Room #101. The nursery is staffed from 8am to 12pm on Sunday mornings. For assistance, please see an usher.

Children's Worship (preschool & early elementary) is offered in the choir room during the 10:30am worship. Children will be dismissed before the sermon and return for offering.

Fire Exits: In addition to the main entrance, fire exits are located on both sides of the chancel and are opened for quicker exit from the church after worship.

Broadcast & Photography: Just a reminder that our services are live streamed on YouTube and may include images of the congregation. St. Stephens Lutheran Church reserves the right to use any photograph/video taken at any service on church grounds or event sponsored by St. Stephens Lutheran Church. A person attending who does not wish to have their image recorded for distribution should make their wishes known to the photographer. By participating in a St. Stephens Lutheran Church service or event or by failing to notify your desire to not have your photograph used, you are agreeing to release and the use of your picture.

Sunday School - 9:15am - 10:15am

For room location assistance, please see an usher.

Little Lambs /Preschool (3 & 4yrs) & Kinders:---- Ed Wing Riser Room---Martha Propst, Jane Guelzow, Sue Seabock & Cynthia Hewitt
Kid Connect/ Grades 1 & 2:-----Ed Wing #222----- Andrea Trent
Kid Connect/ Grades 3-5:-----Ed Wing #220 -----Teresa Ritchie
Jr. High Life Group: Led by Randall & Shannon Cline-----Youth House
Sr. High Life Group: Darel Reese & Jon Guelzow-----Youth House
Young Adult Life Group: Led by Taryn Cline & Dalton Powell-----Peace House
Adults: Led by Pastor/Vicar-----Scripture----- Fellowship Hall
Adults-Men's Bible Study: Led by Dwight Hollar-----2 Peter----School Bldg. #108
Adults: Led by Caleb Taylor/Katie Clontz-----Bible Lessons-----Choir Room
Adults-Ladies: Led by Regina Propst-----"Is God Speaking to Me?" -----Parlor
Adults - Led by Dean Ledbetter-----Eleven Days----- School Bldg. #109

Prayer on Entering

Lord of all creation, you announced the birth of Your Son by arranging a new star to appear. As all who saw it and believed were included in His saving work, lead us and people around the world to receive the light of Your grace with joy, becoming lights ourselves, that many others may join us to praise Your gracious love; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Flowers

Flowers placed at the altar are given to the glory of God by Pat Wilson and family in loving memory of Paul Wilson and Rev. Richard Ziehr, both whom passed on January 5, 2024 and in loving memory of Wilma Hefner & Connie Ziehr.

Greeters

January 3rd- Chris, Danyelle & Connor Wyatt
January 4th 8am- Sharon Little
January 4th 10:30am- John & Karen Nain

January 10th- Brent & Donna Townsend
January 11th 8am- Judy Gurganious
January 11th 10:30am- Teri Cain

Communion Assistants

January 4 8:00am - Dwight Hollar & Tony Spencer
January 11 10:30am - Chris Barringer, Eric Kent, Eddie Warren

Nursery Volunteers - 10:30 am

January 4 - Amy Crouch January 11 - Cynthia Hewitt

Our Response to God Last Week

Last Sunday's Attendance - 406 (80, 99, 227) Sunday School - 106
General Fund: \$52,483.80 (Regular Offerings needed each week: \$30,392.22)
Church Expansion Fund/Building Fund: \$20,814.03
School Endowment Fund: \$290.00
Church Expansion/Building Fund Funds Needed: \$4.4 Million
Church Expansion/Building Fund Account Balance: \$1,348,027.86
Church Expansion Bills Paid So Far: \$1,792,144.75

Stay Connected to St. Stephens Lutheran

SATURDAY

5:30pm - Saturday Evening Worship & Holy Communion

SUNDAY

8:00am - Traditional Worship & Holy Communion

9:15am - Family Bible Hour

10:30am - Contemporary Worship

3:00-6:00pm - Pickle Ball

5:00-8:00pm - Jr. & Sr. High Hangtime - Youth House

6:00pm - Life Group (Dwight Hollar) - Conference Room

MONDAY

9:00am - Lifelight - Pastor Guelzow - Conference Room

10:00am - With Our Hands Ministry

10:30am - LWML Executive Board - Peace House

7:00pm - Men's Bible Study - Youth House

TUESDAY

4:00pm - Lifegroup - Pastor Guelzow - Parlor

4:00PM - MID-WEEK CONGREGATIONAL NEWS DEADLINE

6:00pm - Praise Team Rehearsal

WEDNESDAY

9:00am-3:00pm - Quilters - Conference Room

10:00am - Women's Bible Study (Sonni Thornton) Youth House

6:00pm Lifegroup (Paul Miller) - Youth House

6:30pm Mary Circle - Conference Room

THURSDAY

10:30am - Lifegroup - (Larry Bowman) - Conference Room

NOON - BULLETIN & SCREEN ANNOUNCEMENT DEADLINE

5:45pm - Handbell Choir - Sanctuary

6:30pm - SSLS Steam Expo

7:00pm - Parish Choir - Sanctuary/Choir Room

7:00pm - Lifegroup - (Richard Starnes) - Parlor

FRIDAY

10:00am - With Our Hands Ministry - Youth House

2:00pm - Lifegroup - David Rittenhouse's

5:30pm - Halo Bible Study - Youth House

SATURDAY

5:30pm - Saturday Evening Worship

SUNDAY

8:00am - Traditional Worship

9:15am - Family Bible Hour

10:30am - Contemporary Worship & Holy Communion

12:00pm-6:00pm - Jr. & Sr. High Youth - Cliffhangers Climbing

3:00-6:00pm - Pickle Ball

6:00pm Lifegroup (Dwight Hollar) - conference Room

JOIN US FOR
PICKLEBALL
SUNDAY

3-6 PM

ALL PICKLES WELCOME



QUILTERS

Wednesday,
Jan. 7

9am - 3pm
(come when you can)

Welcome

We will meet in the Conference Room.



Senior Session

Wednesday, January 28

1:00pm

in Conference Room

RSVP to Kristy Smith ksmith@sslcms.org by Friday, Jan. 23

Providing a focal point for aging resources, as well as opportunities designed to extend independent living and enrich the quality of life for older adults.

Presenter: Vickie Blevins, Executive Director

Youth News

Building relationships in Christ to develop and strengthen faithful followers for life.

Sunday Morning Bible Study (9:15 am):

- Middle School (The Youth House side "B")
- High School (The Youth House side "A")

Mark Your Calendars!

1/4 | 5:00-8:00 PM Middle & High School Hang Time

Join us in the Youth House for an evening of fun, food, and meaningful conversation as we kick off a new devotional series, **You Live It**. This series helps students connect their faith to real-life choices, challenges, and everyday moments.

1/11 | 12:00-6:00 PM Cliffhangers Climbing

We're heading to Cliffhangers for an afternoon of climbing and fellowship! Whether you're a first-time climber or a pro, this is a great opportunity to challenge yourself, have fun, and spend time with friends. Sign up and more information at:

sslcms.org/youth

1/18 | 12:00-1:00 PM Confirmation - Unit Check-in

Confirmation students and their families will meet in the sanctuary immediately following the 10:30 AM worship service. This is a chance to reflect on learning so far, ask questions, and stay connected as we continue this faith journey together.

1/18 | 5:00-8:00 PM Middle & High School Hang Time

We continue our **You Live It** devotional series with another evening of food, connection, and faith-filled discussion in the Youth House. Each week builds on the last, helping students see how faith is lived out daily.

1/23-1/24 Confirmation Retreat

Confirmation students are invited to a weekend focused on faith, relationships, and community. This retreat is for all Confirmation students, including those exempt from first-year Confirmation. Sign up and more information at:

www.sslcms.org/youth

Want to Get Connected?

Parents and families are always encouraged to reach out with questions or to learn how to partner in their student's faith journey. Visit sslcms.org/youth for all the latest.

Children's Ministry

Sunday Morning Bible Hour - 9:15-10:15am Ed Wing

Preschool & Kinders: Riser Room

Grades 1 & 2: Ed Wing #222

Grades 3 - 5: Ed Wing #220

CPH Enduring Faith

Children's Worship

10:30AM CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

Preschool- 5th Grade

Meet in the choir room during the sermon

Opportunities to serve weekly

Attention Ladies

Ladies of the church are invited to the women's Sunday school class that meets in the parlor at 9:15 AM each Sunday. We will be starting a new book, "Is God Speaking to Me?" by Lysa Terkeurst.

2026 Offering Envelopes

The 2026 offering envelopes are out in the narthex to pick up. They are in numerical order. A list is provided if you do not remember your number. **If you are an online giver, you will not have offering envelopes but you still have an offering number.** If you have questions about your offering envelopes, please call Tashia at the church office.

Honor and
Remember with
**ALTAR
FLOWERS**

The 2026 Flower chart is available
for weekend signups on the bulletin
board in the narthex.





St. Stephens Lutheran School News

Excellence in Education since 1943

Make A Joyful Noise
(Psalm 98:4)

School Board Members – Scott Clontz, Chairman, Erica Moretz, David Janisko, Kim Yancey, and Shawn Sigmon

Upcoming Events:

Christmas Break – December 22 – January 5

ST. STEPHENS
LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Winter Open House
for prospective parents
Thursday, January 22
6:30pm
Preschool - 8th grade
Please RSVP to: (828) 256-2166

NC OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP ACCEPTED HERE

Providing a Christian Education for over 80 years!

School Office: (828) 256-2166 Website: www.sslswarriors.org Email: school@sslcms.org

Out of the Office

Please keep Pastor Ziehr in your prayers as he will be traveling for the Southeastern District on a mission trip to Ethiopia January 7 - 20.

New Bible Study – Eleven Days

Led by: Dean Ledbetter at 9:15am
In Room #109

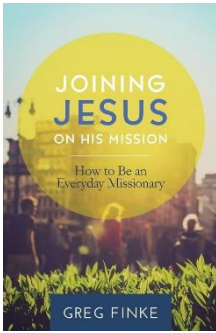
Because the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land was filled with so many incredible miracles, it is easy to overlook the fact that the trip was supposed to be relatively simple. After God saved them through the Passover, their journey consisted of three parts: from their home in Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea, then traveling to Mount Sinai where they received the Law and constructed the Tabernacle and concluding by moving from Sinai to Canaan. That last leg of the journey was quite short, a mere eleven days.

They were so close, yet that eleven days' journey took forty years. But that is really only true for two of them—Joshua and Caleb—because the rest of the adults died in the wilderness, never making it to the Promised Land. It is shocking to realize that their disobedience turned an eleven-day hike into a forty-year death march!

A new Sunday School series is **beginning on January 4 at 9:15am in Room #109**, to study what the Bible teaches on the topic of obedience. We know that Jesus sets us free from bondage to the Law, but we also know that this freedom is not a license to ignore God's commandments. How do we find the right balance—rejoicing that our sins are completely forgiven by our loving Father while faithfully honoring God through our unwavering commitment to being His obedient children?

Join us as we see how the topic of obedience is taught throughout the Bible. The series is expected to last somewhere between eleven days and forty years, however the instructor reserves the right to extend it if needed.

Joining Jesus On His Mission



As we step into 2026, we will embark on a shared journey of everyday mission. Beginning in January, we will be using “*Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary*” by LCMS pastor Greg Finke. This engaging and practical book (along with video bible studies) will help us discover what it means to join Jesus in the places we already live, learn, work, and play.

Jesus is already at work in the lives of people around us—neighbors, co-workers, classmates, friends, and even strangers. Our calling is not to “add more to our plates,” but to recognize and join the mission He’s already carrying out. This is what it means to live out our **Core Values**:

- **We are Disciple-Makers** – The practice of everyday mission helps us grow in faith and nurture the faith of others.
- **We are Everyday Missionaries** – We believe we are called to connect people with Jesus exactly where we live, learn, work, and play.
- **We are Servant Leaders** – Jesus leads by serving; joining Him means loving and serving our neighbors in practical, real ways.
- **We are Kingdom-Driven** – Jesus is the heart of everything we do. As we follow Him, we seek His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Imagine what God can do as each of us joins Jesus right where we are! Over the coming months, we’ll explore practical ways to recognize His work and participate in it with joy. Whether at the dinner table, on the ball field, in the classroom, or at the office, Jesus is already on mission. He’s inviting *you* to join Him.

Today's Readings

Isaiah 60:1-6

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 4 "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. 5 Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. 6 Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

Ephesians 3:1-12

3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to

the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Matthew 2:1-12

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: 6 “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ 7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

LET US PRAY FOR.....

SPECIAL PRAYERS

BUILDING A FIRM FOUNDATION - MISSION & MINISTRY CENTER

ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

ELDERS

SHAUEN & KRISTA TRUMP, Missionaries in Africa

TRINITY HMONG LUTHERAN CHURCH & PASTOR ZANG YANG

MOUNTAINSIDE LUTHERAN CHURCH in Linville, NC

OUR COMMUNITY, COUNTY, STATE, NATION, AND THE WORLD

FIRST RESPONDERS & CIVIL SERVANTS

FIRE FIGHTERS & POLICE

MEDICAL PERSONNEL

JACOB GERSCH, Air Force basic training, grandson of Doug Gilbert

PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE

REV. DARVIN HERMAN FAMILY. His wife, Anne, was called to glory on 12/20.

GARY & HOPE COBLE FAMILY. His brother, Joe, was called to glory on 12/16

PRAYERS FOR OUR HOME MEMBERS

RUTH WILLIS

CATHERINE WINKLER

WILLINE AUSTIN, moved to Abernathy Laurels

FIVE FAMILY PRAYER

LINDSEY & BRIDGETTE DUFFY FAMILY

L J FERGUSON

TRACY FLOWERS & KELLY DRUM FAMILY

DIANE FOX FAMILY

CHERYL FRYE

UPCOMING PROCEDURES

DIANE MAYNOR, pacemaker 1/14

STEVE CAIN, hip replacement 1/21

HOSPICE CARE

PATSY BURGESS, friend of Ronda Reid

PRAYERS FOR ONGOING TREATMENTS

DINKY EDDINS, breast cancer

GIL BRAUCH, cancer

ERVIN BOLICK, cancer & recovering from a fall/compression fracture in spine

LINDA TILLEY, cancer

DELANEY JESSUP, cancer

SHERRY NORRIS, breast cancer

KAY WEAVER, Squamous Cell (Skin) Cancer

SHARON JONES

SALLY RADER, treatment for mold/autoimmune illness

JIM SETZER, cancer, friend of Bob & Marsha Watson

DEBBIE, cancer, awaiting test, friend of Coach Mike Davis

MANDY FREELAND, breast cancer, neighbor/friend of the VonDohlens

CRYSTAL MACK, cancer, friend of Faith Comfort Dog

GERRY HOEKZEMA, cancer, friend of Larry Bowman

JA'NEICE DAVIS, cancer, neighbor of David & Martha Propst

RECOVERING

J P NELSON, kidney transplant

JOE BURNS, health issues/upcoming surgery in January on veins in his arms, grandson of Helen Suttlemyre

PAM SIGMON, health issues

JACK ROBERTS, College Pines rehab/broken hip, husband of Dana

ALLEN CROWE, recovering from knee surgery

MIKE BENSON, health issues, brother of Melissa Mace

RUBY HALL, home recovering

LARRY HARRIS - Uncle of Angie Poovey, health issues

BILLY SMITH, recovering from a stroke in his eye, Tom's brother

ANNA-GRACE DOVER, home recovering from spinal fusion surgery

KAREN SHADE, home recovering from surgery

JIM LANE, flu

ADAM FOGLE

KAY HOLLAR

JERRY RITCHIE