

**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

Third Sunday of Advent

December 13 & 14, 2025

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-----*The Wonder of Christmas*-----Parlor

Prayer on Entering

O blessed Lord, grant us watchful hearts to behold the mystery of Christ's coming without doubt or fear as we await the fullness of all that He promised, lest our hearts be deprived of joy and our anxieties steal away the peace He has planted in us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and to the end of the ages.

Greeters

December 13th - Keith & Sue Binns
December 14th - 8am - Judy Gurganious
December 14th - 10:30am - Eric & Nikki Fisher

December 20th (Children's Christmas Service)- Linda McNeely,
Judy Buff, Brent & Donna Townsend
December 21st 8am- Pat Wilson
December 21st 10:30am- April Drake

Communion Assistants

December 14 - 10:30am - Chris Barringer, Eric Kent, Eddie Warren
December 21 8:00am - Todd Little & Ralph Mueller

Nursery Volunteers - 10:30 am

December 14 - Teresa Ritchie December 21 - Shannon Cline

Our Response to God Last Week

Last Sunday's Attendance - 574 (77, 110, 387) Sunday School - 158
General Fund: \$33,836.30 (Regular Offerings needed each week: \$28,306.91)
Giving Tuesday - \$67,827.46
Church Expansion Fund/Building Fund: \$3,516.91
School Endowment Fund: \$605.00
Church Expansion/Building Fund Funds Needed: \$4.4 Million
Church Expansion/Building Fund Account Balance: \$1,259,340.81
Church Expansion Bills Paid So Far: \$1,788,842.32

Stay Connected to St. Stephens Lutheran

SATURDAY

5:30pm – Saturday Evening Worship & Holy Communion

SUNDAY

8:00am – Traditional Worship

9:15am – Family Bible Hour

10:30am–Contemporary Worship & Holy Communion

11:30am – Practice for Readers for Children’s Worship

12:00-1:00pm – Confirmation Unit Check In – Sanctuary

2:00-5:00pm – Middle School Youth Party – Youth House

6:00-9:00pm – High School Youth Party – Youth House

MONDAY

9:00am – Lifelight (Pastor Guelzow) – Conference Room

10:00am – With Our Hands Ministry

1:00pm – Esther Circle – Conference Room

7:00pm – Men’s Bible Study – Youth House

TUESDAY

1:00pm – Elizabeth Circle – Conference Room

4:00pm – Lifegroup (Pastor Guelzow) – Parlor

4:00PM – MID-WEEK CONGREGATIONAL NEWS DEADLINE

6:00pm – Praise Team Rehearsal

WEDNESDAY

10:30am – Mid-Week Advent Service

6:30pm – Mid-Week Advent Service

THURSDAY

NOON – BULLETIN & SCREEN ANNOUNCEMENT DEADLINE

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

5:45pm – Handbell Choir – Sanctuary

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

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

FRIDAY

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

11:30am – SSLS Early Dismissal

2:00pm – Lifegroup – David Rittenhouse’s

5:00pm – Children’s Christmas Worship Rehearsal

5:30pm – Halo Bible Study – Youth House

SATURDAY

5:30pm – Children’s Christmas Worship & Cookie Reception

SUNDAY

8:00am – Traditional Worship & Holy Communion

9:15am – Family Bible Hour

10:30am–Contemporary Worship

Out Of The Office

Pastor Ziehr is out of the office attending the funeral service & committal for his mother – December 12 – 14



Operation ELF

Help us bring comfort and joy to our community.

Please return your ELF gift
no later
than Wednesday, Dec. 17.



Looking to serve this holiday season? Individuals and families can join us in making a difference.

*Parents must stay, this is not a drop off event.

Who can serve: 4 yr. old and older

When: Sunday, December 14

Time: 2pm-3:30pm

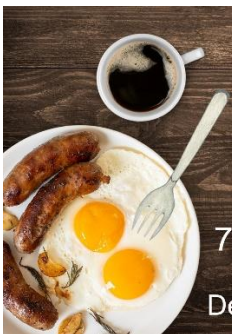
Location: 1925 Tate Blvd SE

To help with planning, please RSVP to Jodi in the church office by 12/12 if you plan to attend

PICKLEBALL



**PICKLEBALL IS ON HOLIDAY BREAK
JOIN US AGAIN JAN. 4**



MENS BREAKFAST

Saturday, Dec. 20

7:30am - Fellowship Hall

Devotion, food and fellowship

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!

12/14 12p-1p Confirmation - Unit Check-in

Confirmation students and their families will meet in the sanctuary immediately after the 10:30 am worship service for the Confirmation Unit Check-in.

12/14 Youth Christmas Parties

Get ready for a fun, festive hangout with friends. We'll have Christmas music, games, and a Dirty Santa Gift Exchange (totally optional - \$10 max). Bring your favorite appetizer or dessert.

Middle School Party: 2–5 PM

High School Party: 6–9 PM

12/31 8p-8a New Year's Eve Lock-In

Students are invited to ring in the New Year at our annual New Year's Eve Lock-in! Join us for a night of games, food, fellowship, and a fun New Year's countdown. Sign-up and more information can be found @ www.sslcms.org/youth

1/4 12p-3p Middle School Hang Time

Join us in The Youth House for an afternoon of relaxation, food, and a thought-provoking discussion.

1/4 5p-8p High School Hang Time

Join us in The Youth House for an afternoon of relaxation, food, and a thought-provoking discussion.

Looking to serve or want to learn more about Youth Ministry?
Visit sslcms.org/youth for all the latest.



Christmas
Memorials or Honorariums
will support the General Fund of St.
Stephens Lutheran Church.

Forms are located on the
welcome desk and can be
turned in there.

Deadline for memorials is Dec. 15



CHRISTMAS SPIRIT
WEAR YOUR FAVORITE OR UGLY SWEATER
DECEMBER 20 / 21 *Weekend*

Also, bring in a non-perishable food
item for the Backpack Outreach



**ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND SCHOOL**

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(828) 256-9865
WWW.SSLCMS.ORG

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:
*7 PM CONTEMPORARY CANDLELIGHT
10 PM TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE:
10 AM WITH HOLY COMMUNION

*LIVE-STREAMED SERVICE

Thank You

The Elizabeth Circle would like to thank all the members of the congregation and school, who took time to write Christmas cards to our home bound members. We sent out approximately 2500 cards this year, with all of your help. Those assisting with sorting the cards and tying them in bundles include: Carol Howard, Betty Ikerd, Karen Killian, Doris Sigmon, Linda Tilley, and Kim Yancey. Gift bags were assembled with the help of the following: Myrna Boman, Carol Howard, Betty Ikerd, Karen Killian, Sandra McCrary, Joanna Moore, Donna Setzer, Doris Sigmon, Kristy Smith, and Linda Tilley. A special thanks to all these ladies for their time and expertise, and to someone who attached a tag to their cards saying, "Thank you for doing this for our members." This labor of love provides a brighter Christmas for these special members of our church family.

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

Children's Christmas Service

**Saturday,
December 20th
5:30pm**

Cookie reception to
follow service



Cemetery Updates For 2026

On January 1, 2026 cemetery plots will see an increase in price. The cost of a cemetery plot is for the perpetual care, long term maintenance of the grounds.

Church members - \$400

Non-Members who currently own a plot - \$1,300

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 are currently completing an Advent study and will start a new book, "Is God Speaking to Me?" by Lysa Terkeurst, in January.

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.



Advent 2025

MIDWEEK SERVICE

10:30 AM

6:30 PM

12/3 • 12/10 • 12/17



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

DECEMBER

UPCOMING EVENTS

ST STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

DEC 19

EARLY DISMISSAL

11:30 AM PICK UP

DEC 22- 31

CHRISTMAS BREAK

SCHOOL CLOSED

Today's Readings

Isaiah 35

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the

recompense of God. He will come and save you." 5 Then the

eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf

unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the

tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the

wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall

become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water;

in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall

become reeds and rushes. 8 And a highway shall be there, and it

shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass

over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they

are fools, they shall not go astray.[a] 9 No lion shall be there, nor

shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found

there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed

of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing;

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain

gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

James 5:7-11

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the

Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the

earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and

the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts,

for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble

against one another, brothers, so that you may not be

judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an

example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the

prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we

consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have

heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the

purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and

merciful.

Matthew 11:2-15

2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'" 11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

LET US PRAY...

SPECIAL PRAYERS

BUILDING A FIRM FOUNDATION - MISSION & MINISTRY CENTER

ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

KID CONNECT

SHAUN & KRISTA TRUMP, Missionaries in Africa

TRINITY HMONG LUTHERAN CHURCH & PASTOR ZANG YANG

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH in Conover, NC

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

FIRST RESPONDERS & CIVIL SERVANTS

FIRE FIGHTERS & POLICE

PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE.

HEIDI GARDNER STEEVES & FAMILY. Her father, Milton Gardner, was called to glory on 12/6.

KRISTIN PRIOLA & FAMILY. Her father-in-law, Phil, was called to glory on 12/6.

PRAYERS FOR OUR HOME MEMBERS

HAZEL LOVELACE

REBECCA MOFFETT

CLARK & SHERRY NORRIS

FIVE FAMILY PRAYER

COACH MIKE & DIANE DAVIS

MIRANDA CHRISTENBURY FAMILY

BILL & SANDRA CHRISTENBURY

CLINT & KATIE SWEATMAN FAMILY

MICHAEL ISENHOUR

PRAYER OF PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

The birth of **EZRA MARSHALL ADAMS** to Addison Enci & Trevor Adams on December 8. Proud grandparents are John & Amity Enci, and proud great-grandmother is Lavonne Golden.

HOSPITALIZED

RUBY HALL, Baptist

MICHAEL RINK, health issues, friend of Allen Killian

WANDA BRITTON, ICU CVMC, mother of Bobbie Starnes

MATTHEW EWALD, inoperable brain bleed, son of Larry & Debbie and nephew of Gene Char

HOSPICE CARE

DORIS HOLLAR - staying with her daughter, Sheila Dyson

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

PATSY BURGESS, pancreatic cancer, friend of Ronda Reid

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

JOANN FOX MOSER, cancer, friend of Pat Hovis

CRYSTAL MACK, cancer, friend of Faith Comfort Dog

RECOVERING

J P NELSON, kidney transplant

DEAN LEDBETTER, kidney donor

KENNETH VESPER, rehab, St. Louis, brother-in-law of David Pingel

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

TIMOTHY MARTIN, recovering from bypass surgery

PAM SIGMON, health issues

ALAN YANCEY, recovering from sinus surgery

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

EUGENE LANDIS, son of Nancy Hicks

STEPHANIE STOVAL, pneumonia, friend of David & Martha Propst and Lynne & Kevin Carpenter

BRANDON JOHNSON, suspicion of a heart attack, son of Cindy & Doug

HARRY MILLER, recovering from a cinder block being thrown off the overpass, family friend of Cindy & Doug Johnson

KATHY BOLIEK, home recovering

ALLEN CROWE, home recovering from knee surgery

MIKE BENSON, health issues, brother of Melissa Mace

ELAYNE LAMBRECHTS, health issues, mother of Deanna Dickinson