

**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](http://www.sslcms.org)

School: 828-256-2166  
[www.sslswarriors.org](http://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

**First Sunday After Christmas      December 27 & 28, 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**

Abba Father, You are the God of endings and beginnings. We commit to Your grace and mercy this past year and the year about to begin. Throughout the coming weeks and months, make the presence of Your Holy Spirit known in our lives, drawing us ever closer to Jesus and uniting all generations of Your faithful people in bonds of love, care, and service as we continue to grow in our baptismal grace and await the joy of eternal life in Your glorious presence; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## **Greeters**

December 27<sup>th</sup> - Cathy Drum & Brenda Little  
December 28<sup>th</sup> 8am- Gregg & Vickie Fletcher  
December 28<sup>th</sup> 10:30am- Phillip & Sarah Starnes

January 3rd- Sharon Little  
January 4th 8am- Judy Gurganious  
January 4th 10:30am- John & Karen Nain

## **Communion Assistants**

December 28 10:30am - David Propst, Jon Guelzow & Tony Cook  
January 4 8:00am - Dwight Hollar & Tony Spencer

## **Nursery Volunteers - 10:30 am**

December 28 - Sheila Poovey      January 4 - Amy Crouch

## **Our Response to God Last Week**

Last Sunday's Attendance - 723 (354, 110, 259)    Sunday School -  
General Fund: \$31,672.70 (Regular Offerings needed each week: \$28,306.91)  
Church Expansion Fund/Building Fund: \$62,996.91  
School Endowment Fund: \$100.00  
Church Expansion/Building Fund Funds Needed: \$4.4 Million  
Church Expansion/Building Fund Account Balance: \$1,328,598.49  
Church Expansion Bills Paid So Far: \$1,790,300.09

## **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

### **MONDAY**

NO Lifelight - will resume January 5

10:00am - With Our Hands Ministry

### **TUESDAY**

NO Lifegroup - will resume January 6

6:00pm - Praise Team Rehearsal

### **WEDNESDAY**

NOON - BULLETIN & SCREEN ANNOUNCEMENT DEADLINE

NOON - MID-WEEK CONGREGATIONAL NEWS DEADLINE

8:00pm-8:00am - Youth New Year's Eve Lock-In - Youth House

### **THURSDAY - OFFICES CLOSED - HAPPY NEW YEAR**

### **FRIDAY**

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

5:30pm - Halo Bible Study - Youth House

### **SATURDAY**

5:30pm - Saturday Evening Worship

### **SUNDAY**

8:00am - Traditional Worship & Holy Communion

9:15am - Family Bible Hour

10:30am-Contemporary Worship

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

## **Out of the Office**

Offices will be closed January 1.

Pastor Shea will be on vacation till January 3.

Savannah Lee will be on vacation till January 4.

## 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!**

#### **12/31 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](http://www.sslcms.org/youth)

#### **1/4 5p-8p Middle & High School Hang Time**

Join us in The Youth House for an afternoon of fellowship, food, and discussion as we begin a new devotional series, You Live It. This series will encourage us to connect faith with real-life challenges and daily decisions.

#### **1/11 12p-6p Cliffhangers Climbing**

Join us for an afternoon of climbing and fellowship as we head to Cliffhangers! First-time climber or pro, this is a great chance to challenge yourself, have fun, and spend time with friends. Sign-up and more information can be found at [sslcms.org/youth](http://sslcms.org/youth)

#### **1/18 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.

#### **1/18 5p-8p Middle & High School Hang Time**

Join us in The Youth House for an afternoon of fellowship, food, and discussion as we continue our devotional series, You Live It. This series will encourage us to connect faith with real-life challenges and daily decisions.

#### **1/23 & 1/24 Confirmation Retreat - Camp Linn Haven**

**Looking to serve or want to learn more about Youth Ministry?**  
Visit [sslcms.org/youth](http://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

## **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.





## 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



**NC OPPORTUNITY  
SCHOLARSHIP  
ACCEPTED HERE**



**ST. STEPHENS**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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



Providing a Christian Education for over 80 years!







School Office: (828) 256-2166    Website: [www.sslswarriors.org](http://www.sslswarriors.org)    Email: [school@sslcms.org](mailto:school@sslcms.org)



## Thank You

I would like to thank the ladies of the LWML for the bag of useful goodies. I would also like to thank the congregation for the beautiful cards. I enjoy reading each one of them. Merry Christmas and God's blessings to you.

*Jo Wilhelm*

I have so many things to be thankful for. Thank you to the carolers that came to my home and sang Christmas Carols. Especially the young child that gave me the Christmas gift. That was the highlight of my day. Also, thanks for the meals that Pastor Guelzow brings to me monthly. His visits mean a lot to me.

*Catherine Winkler*

Family of St. Stephens,

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you" Philippians 1:3  
All of your cards, gifts, and especially your prayers have been such an encouragement and blessing to us. So, Holly and I want to say: "Thank You!" We are so grateful to be here and to be part of the St. Stephens family. As we move into a new year, we look forward to the many great things God will do in, among, and through us to *Connect People with Jesus*. The Lord grant you a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

*In Christ,*

*Pastor Shea & Holly Pennington*

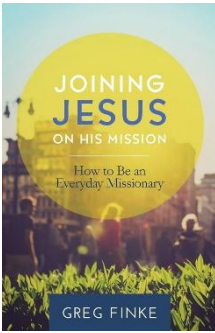
Thank you so much for the kind and loving words given after the death of my mother. Special thanks for the special memorials given in her memory.

*Dave & Trudi Ziehr & Family*

I want to thank the members of the church for all the prayers, phone calls, texts, cards and notes and monetary donations in direction of my kidney transplant and now recovery. I am looking forward to once more enjoying fellowship with ya'll. I particularly miss talks with Pastor Dave, participating in Sunday School and Friday Night H. A. L. O., the music and the friendliness which abounds. I have never felt such support, even in the days I was in the ministry. Thank you, Dean Ledbetter, for the kidney and thanks to my friend (little sis) for inviting me (and persisting).

*J. P. Nelson*

## 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 63:7-14

7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. 8 He said, “Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me”; and so he became their Savior. 9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. 11 Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, 12 who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, 13 who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; 14 like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

### Galatians 4:4-7

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

## Matthew 2:13-23

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." 16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more."

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." 21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

# LET US PRAY FOR.....

## SPECIAL PRAYERS

**BUILDING A FIRM FOUNDATION - MISSION & MINISTRY CENTER**

**ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL**

**UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

**FAMILY BIBLE HOUR**

**SHAUEN & KRISTA TRUMP**, Missionaries in Africa

**TRINITY HMONG LUTHERAN CHURCH & PASTOR ZANG YANG**

**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH** in Hickory, NC

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

**FIRST RESPONDERS & CIVIL SERVANTS**

**FIRE FIGHTERS & POLICE**

**MEDICAL PERSONNEL**

## PRAYERS FOR OUR HOME MEMBERS

**BETTY SIGMON**

**KAY WEAVER**

**JO WILHELM**

## FIVE FAMILY PRAYER

**KATHY BOLIEK**

**ED BOWMAN**

**BRIAN & PAM CLOHESY FAMILY**

**JACY & STANLEY CROCKER FAMILY**

**BILL & CARL DENTON FAMILY**

## PRAYER OF PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

The birth of **BO PATTEN FLETCHER** on December 18 to Jason & Jacqueline. Proud grandparents are Mark & Sharon Radke.

## HOSPITALIZED

**ADAM FOGLE**, CVMC, pneumonia

**KAY HOLLAR**, FRMC, pneumonia/pacemaker

## **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

**CRYSTAL MACK**, cancer, friend of Faith Comfort Dog

## **RECOVERING**

**J P NELSON**, kidney transplant

**DEAN LEDBETTER**, kidney donor

**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

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

**KATHY BOLIEK**, home recovering

**ALLEN CROWE**, recovering from knee surgery

**MIKE BENSON**, health issues, brother of Melissa Mace

**ELAYNE LAMBRECHTS**, health issues, mother of Deanna Dickinson

**RUBY HALL**, home recovering

**JASON PRUITT**, recovering from thumb surgery

**LARRY HARRIS** - Uncle of Angie Poovey, health issues

**DANE CLINE**, recovering from surgery

**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