

St Stephen's Episcopal Church

All Are Welcome!

The First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2024, 8:00 and 10:30 am Worship Services



WELCOME TO ST. STEPHEN'S!

It is a joy to have you worship with us today. We believe everyone who worships with us is sent to us by God. So, welcome.

As we gather for worship, we want to remind everyone of a few important items:

- Please turn off or silence your electronic devices.
- We strongly encourage you to enter the sanctuary in silence as you prepare for worship.
- Before worship begins, we encourage you to speak to God. During worship, be ready for God to speak to you.
- After worship, we invite you to fellowship with one another, especially those God has brought to us — our visitors.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

As you come in this morning and settle into your seat, I invite you to think about the following:

- ❖ Wherever we go, we have a reason for going there. What is your reason for being here today?
- ❖ God is merciful and kind to us each and every day. What thanksgiving do you bring to God today?
- ❖ Because each day brings many challenges, what concern(s) do you bring to God today?
- ❖ As your Rector, I have come with thanksgiving for God's grace and mercy and to worship Him; because today is a reminder to me that another week has ended and a new week has begun. It is my hope that you have come to do the same. I encourage you to join me as we call upon our God and worship Him.

Canon Wilmot—a son of God

The Flag for December is raised by Sally Davis,
In loving memory of a life lost too soon,

Forrest Benjamin Rogers

January 13, 1992—November 17, 2014

Forrest served our country with the United States Coast Guard.

Prelude

Sheep May Safely Graze

G.F. Handel

✝ *This symbol represents the point at which we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross during worship.*

❖ *Announcements* ❖

The Word of God *Please stand for the Opening Prayer.*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Leader Come and save us, O Lord God of hosts.

People *Come and save us, O Lord God of hosts.*

Leader Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved:

People *O Lord God of Hosts.*

Leader Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

People *Come and save us, O Lord God of Hosts.*

Leader Show us your mercy, O Lord:

People *And grant us your salvation.*



Opening Hymn ***Rejoice! Rejoice Believers***

Hymnal 68

Rejoice! rejoice, believers,
and let your lights appear!
The evening is advancing,
and darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising,
and soon he will draw nigh;
up, watch in expectation!
at midnight comes the cry.

See that your lamps are burning,
replenish them with oil;
look now for your salvation,
the end of sin and toil.
The marriage-feast is waiting,
the gates wide open stand;
rise up, ye heirs of glory,
the Bridegroom is at hand!

Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
arise, thou Sun so longed for,
above this darkened sphere!
With hearts and hands uplifted,
we plead, O Lord, to see
the day of earth's redemption,
and ever be with thee!

✠ Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People His mercy endures forever.

The Decalogue *Please sit or kneel*

The Celebrant continues

Hear the commandments of God to his people:

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of bondage.

You shall have no other gods but me.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not make for yourself any idol.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not invoke with malice the Name of the Lord your God.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Honor your father and your mother.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not commit murder.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not commit adultery.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not steal.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not be a false witness.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Confession of Sin

The Celebrant continues

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8, 9*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence is kept.

Celebrant and People

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The Celebrant stands and says

Almighty God have mercy † on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.

People Amen.

Holy God,

Holy and Mighty,

Holy Immortal One,

People Have mercy upon us.

The Collect for The First Sunday in Advent

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us pray.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

People Amen.

The Lessons

May we hear the Word of God through these words.

A Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah 33:14–16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

The Word of the Lord

People Thanks be to God.

Psalm 25: 1–9

To be read responsively by the Lay Reader and the Congregation.

L To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
my God, I put my trust in you; *
let me not be humiliated,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

**C Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**

L Show me your ways, O LORD, *
and teach me your paths.

**C Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.**

L Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, *
for they are from everlasting.

**C Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.**

L Gracious and upright is the LORD; *
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

**C He guides the humble in doing right *
and teaches his way to the lowly.**

L All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Celebrant and People

**Glory to the † Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

May we hear the Word of God through these words.

A Reading from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians 3:9–13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Word of the Lord

People Thanks be to God.

“Sleepers, wake!” A voice astounds us,
 the shout of rampart guards surrounds us:
 “Awake, Jerusalem, arise!”

Midnight’s peace their cry has broken,
 their urgent summons clearly spoken:
 “The time has come, O maidens wise!
 Rise up, and give us light; the Bridegroom is in sight.
 Alleluia! Your lamps prepare and hasten there,
 that you the wedding feast may share.”

Zion hears the watchmen singing;
 her heart with joyful hope is springing,
 she wakes and hurries through the night.
 Forth he comes, her Bridegroom glorious
 in strength of grace, in truth victorious:
 her star is risen, her light grows bright.
 Now come, most worthy Lord, God’s Son, Incarnate Word,
 Alleluia! We follow all and heed your call
 to come into the banquet hall.

When the Gospel is being announced, a cross is made,

✝ (on the forehead) in my mind to understand it,

✝ (on the lips) on my lips to proclaim it, and

✝ (over the heart) in my heart to live it.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 21:25—36
People *Glory to you, Lord Christ.*

Jesus said, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The Gospel of the Lord
People *Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

Sermon Hymn

Lamb of God, the heavens adore you;
let saints and angels sing before you,
as harps and cymbals swell the sound.
Twelve great pearls, the city's portals:
through them we stream to join the immortals
as we with joy your throne surround.
No eye has known the sight, no ear heard such delight:
Alleluia! Therefore we sing to greet our King;
for ever let our praises ring.

Please use this time to silently reflect on what the Lord has spoken to you.

Please stand.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation

(We bow for the following two lines in bold.)

he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

✝ We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Please sit or kneel for The Prayers of the People.

The Prayers of the People

The Prayer Leader and People pray responsively.

Leader The Lord be with you.

People *And also with you.*

Leader Let us pray.

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;

People *That we all may be one.*

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

People *That your Name may be glorified by all people.*

We pray for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sean, our Presiding Bishop, Ruth our Bishop, Wilmot our priest, Kim our Deacon, and for all bishops and other ministers;

People *That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.*

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world, for Joseph our President, Henry our Governor, and Marilyn our Mayor;

People *That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

People *That our works may find favor in your sight.*

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

People *That they may be delivered from their distress.*

Give to the departed eternal rest;

People *Let light perpetual shine upon them.*

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

People *May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.*

Let us pray for our own needs and those of our loved ones and others, for the men and women who are serving in the armed forces, and all others who serve to preserve and protect lives, and those who have asked us to remember them in our prayers, especially our families, friends, and loved ones.

Lord in your mercy

People *Hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in those areas that have been devastated either by man-made or natural disaster — especially those suffering from the destruction of Hurricanes Helene & Milton. Let us pray for those affected by acts of violence here at home and all around the world. Let us also remember and pray for the many volunteers in harm's way who are working to support those in need.

Lord, in your mercy.

People Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for God's people throughout the world, especially the Anglican Communion, The Episcopal Church, and The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. Today we are praying for: Canterbury House, Ms. Sally Lorbach, Executive Director, *and Province of The Episcopal Church of South Sudan.*

Lord, in your mercy.

People Hear our prayer.

**Additional Prayers*

LET US PRAY AND GIVE THANKS FOR OUR VISITORS.

LET US PRAY FOR TRAVELERS THIS WEEK.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO: James Benson (12/1), Charlotte Houghtaling (12/1), Michele Hennessy (12/2), Kathy Ingalls (12/5), Jane Panarella (12/6), Teresa Anderson (12/7), Marilyn Brucks (12/7), Pamela Rhodes (12/7).

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

LET US PRAY FOR OUR PARISH FAMILY.

INTERCESSORY AND THANKSGIVING PRAYER. As we continue to hold one another up in prayer in this parish, this week we are praying for:

Phyllis Tiller, Miriam Tramonti, Donna Walsh, Ed Walton, Dick & Frances Warner, Maggie Warren, Hilary Weick, Blanche & Chris Welborn, George & Julieann Wertheimer & Kelley, Jane & Billy Willard.

Celebrant and People

Gracious and most loving God, we join them in committing to you whatever concerns they may have, asking you to let your will be done for them. We also join them in giving you thanks, for your many blessings bestowed upon them and their loved ones. We praise you and thank you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

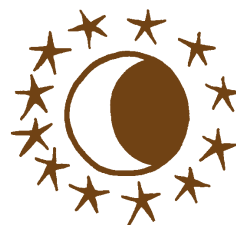
Please stand.

The Peace

Jesus said, *Peace I leave with you; my Peace I give to you . . .* John 14:27

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People ***And also with you.***



At the conclusion of the peace, the Celebrant says:

Celebrant God is Good!

People ***All the Time.***

The Holy Communion

Offertory

Watchman, Awake

C. Nygard

Doxology—to be sung

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;

praise Him, all creatures here below;

O Praise Him! Alleluia!

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:

praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

O Praise Him! O Praise Him!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving and Sanctus Eucharistic Prayer A

Please remain standing

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: ***And also with you.***

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People ***It is right to give him thanks and praise.***

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every-where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

Bow during the underlined text

S129

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

**God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

✠ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Please sit, kneel or remain standing.

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Celebrant continues

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

People Amen.

And now, let us sing in thanksgiving the prayer our Savior Christ taught us,

Celebrant and People

**Our Father, which 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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen.**



+ + + + + + + + + +

The Breaking of the Bread
Celebrant and People ~ to be sung

S154

Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia.
Christ our Pass-o-ver is sac-ri-ficed for us;
There-fore let us keep the feast.
Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia.

The Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith,
with thanksgiving.

*This is the Lord's table, not of the church, but of the Lord.
It is made ready for those who love Him
and for those who want to love Him more.
So come, you who have much faith and you who have little;
You who have been here often and you who have not been here long;
You who have tried to follow and you who have failed;
Come, because it is the Lord who invites you.
It is His will that those who want Him should meet Him here.*

Please join in singing our Communion Hymns.

Alleluia

Hymnal 178

*Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia! Give Praise to his Name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
He is the King of creation.

Refrain

Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
Jesus has died and has risen.

Refrain

We have been crucified with Christ.
Now we shall live for ever.

Refrain

Come, let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Savior

Refrain

Precious Lord

LEVAS 106

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light, take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me on.

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone; hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand, lest I fall, take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me on.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near,
And the day is past and gone; at the river I stand,
Guide my feet, hold my hand, take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me on.

O, How I Love Jesus

LEVAS 95

There is a name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth;
It sounds like music in mine ear,
The sweetest name on earth.

*O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
Because He first loved me!*

It tells me of a Savior's love,
Who died to set me free;
It tells me of His precious blood,
The sinner's perfect plea.

Refrain

It tells me what my Father hath
In store for ev'ry day,
And though I tread a darksome path,
Yields sunshine all the way.

Refrain

It tells of one whose loving heart
Can feel my deepest woe,
Who in each sorrow bears a part,
That none can bear below.

Refrain

After Communion, the Celebrant says: Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The Celebrant gives the blessing

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin.

People Amen.

May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love.

People Amen.

May you, who rejoice in the celebration of the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and your loved ones far and near and remain with all of you for ever.

People Amen.

Please be seated for a brief announcement.

Benediction *To be sung—please stand.*

**God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again.**



Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
 Hail, in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
 He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
 to take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong,
 to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
 to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
 whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth,
 and love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth:
 before him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;
 and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

Kings shall bow down before him, and gold and incense bring;
 all nations shall adore him, his praise all people sing;
 to him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
 his kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.

O'er every foe victorious, he on his throne shall rest;
 from age to age more glorious, all-blessing and all-blest:
 the tide of time shall never his covenant remove;
 his Name shall stand for ever, his changeless Name of Love.

Celebrant We are called to be one with God and each other in Christ.
People ***By living the Gospel with love and compassion.***

Celebrant Alleluia. Alleluia. Let us go in peace to love and serve God and
 one another.
People ***Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.***

THE WORSHIP HAS ENDED. LET THE SERVICE BEGIN.

“... what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?” *Micah 6:8*



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Our Mission
is to be one with God and
humanity in Christ
by living the Gospel
with love and compassion.



Our Vision
is to become comfortable
with Jesus Christ
and boldly proclaim Him.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE CELEBRATION AT ST. STEPHEN'S

Ministers: The Congregants of St. Stephen's, Family, Friends and Visitors
Celebrant: The Very Rev. Canon Dr. Wilmot T. Merchant II
Deacon: The Rev. Kim Hoop
Director of Music: Roberta Rowland-Raybold
Vergers: Cathy Fellows and Robert Dunn

MINISTERS and LAYLEADERS

The Most Rev. Sean Rowe, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church
The Right Rev. Ruth Woodliff-Stanley, Bishop, The Diocese of SC
The Very Rev. Canon Dr. Wilmot T. Merchant, II, Rector

Vestry Members

❖ Will Bridges, Senior Warden (2025) ❖ Richard B. Martin, Jr. (2024)
❖ Mike Raley (2024) ❖ Bill Simpson, Jr. (2024) ❖ Veronica Brown (2025)
❖ Marrjo Shattuck (2025) ❖ Sue Crouch (2026) ❖ Robert Dunn (2026)
❖ Wayne Mumford (2026).

Associate Vestry Members

❖ Barbara DiMartini (2024) ❖ Bud Nelson (2024)

Vestry Officers

❖ Bill Mann, Treasurer ❖ Cheri Spence, Assistant Treasurer
❖ Jane Buckner, Parish/Vestry Clerk, Vickie Arrington, Asst Parish/Vestry Clerk

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