

News, Notes, and Prayers

from St. Stephen Lutheran Church March 2024

Who We Are

St. Stephen Lutheran Church is God's people in The Plainfields, Piscataway, and Edison.

Staff

Pastor Frantisek Janak pastor@ststephenspnj.org
Jeanne Elmuccio, office secretary secretary@ststephenspnj.org
James Horan, director of music

Congregational Council

Trecia Benjamin
Bill Cochran (President)
Jim Deene
Randy Gerling
Frank Gianneschi
Effil Hemmings
Donna Hussey
Patricia Klatt
Bob Merring
Eloise Newton (Secretary)
Rich Newton Jr. (Vice President)
Audrey Oddman

Office

3145 Park Ave., South Plainfield, NJ 07080
908-757-4474

What's Happening

Sundays, March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

10:30 a.m. + Worship with Holy Communion

Wednesday, March 6

7:30 pm – Lenten Prayer Service

Tuesday, March 19

7:30 p.m. Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 20

5:00 p.m. + St. Stephen's Pop-Up Food Pantry

Sunday, March 24 – PALM SUNDAY

Thursday, March 28 – MAUNDY THURSDAY

Friday, March 29 – GOOD FRIDAY

Sunday, March 31 – EASTER SUNDAY



St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

3145 Park Avenue
South Plainfield, New Jersey 07080
908-757-4474

Address Correction Requested

Pastor's Letter

Dear community,

Lent has arrived once again, bringing with it a season of reflection, repentance, and learning. As a community, we are committed to making the most of this sacred time.

Starting from February 21st, we have an exciting opportunity for all of you to participate in our Zoom Lenten Study Sessions titled "Creating Bigger Stories with René August" (please refer to the relevant flyer in the newsletter for more details). These sessions will continue, always starting at 7:30PM, until March 20th, providing ample time for us to engage in meaningful discussions and explore profound insights from Rev. René August together. I sincerely encourage each of you to join us on this contemplative journey.

In the event that you are unable to attend a session, please rest assured that the recorded video will be available for viewing starting the Wednesday night of the session and will remain accessible for one week. This way, you can catch up on any missed content and fully engage with the material. The accompanying study guide will also be provided, allowing you to reflect on the questions and continue your personal growth at your own pace.



Furthermore, I am excited to share that on March 6th at 6:30 PM, we will be hosting the Lenten Wednesday Prayer Service. This special worship service, designed to mark the halfway point of Lent, will be a shorter and more intimate gathering. It will be held both in person and online, streamed live on Facebook for those who prefer to participate remotely. This will be an opportunity for us to come together as a community and draw strength for the second half of Lent.

I look forward to your presence and active participation throughout this Lenten season. May our time together be rewarding and deepen our connection with ourselves, each other, and our shared spiritual journey with God.

Blessings,

The Rev. František Janák



Church Council

Lent is early this year. Ash Wednesday is on February 14th. Easter will be on Sunday, March 31st.

Pastor's report: Caroling went well. People were visited at nursing homes. Meeting with the secretary are set for Tuesdays at 10. Two new members have been added. Reviewing ways to reduce the length of the service with Worship and Music.

President/ Evangelism report: Followed up with Synod on status of our new Constitution review. Synod secretary will follow up with reviewer and circle back with any concerns. Evangelism was postponed due to inclement weather and rescheduled. The turnout was much diminished, about 12 persons stopped by.

Treasurer's Report: The year ended with a small surplus

Financial Secretary: Deposits matched counting slips.

Worship and Music: The meetings focused on shortening the length of the service and Lent.

Social Ministry: The next meeting will focus on setting the agenda for 2024.

Property:

Liaison: A meeting will be set with the Church which has routinely failed to keep the church clean following their use.

Discipleship: Another pledge has been received raising our pledged income to the highest level in a few years.

Mutual Ministry: Mutual Ministry met and discussed requests that would improve transparency and requested vacation time.

Technology: Engagement continues to be tracked. Photos are hugely popular as are videos on controversial subjects. Thanks to the new speakers provided by a church using our space, the overall sound quality has improved. We still struggle, from time to time, with volume issues due to changes in settings.

Prayer Adjourn

Thanks, The Church Council



From the Treasurer

	General Fund Income	Budget Expenses	Over/Short
January 2024	11,784.00	12,874.41	(1,090.41)



From the Discipleship Committee

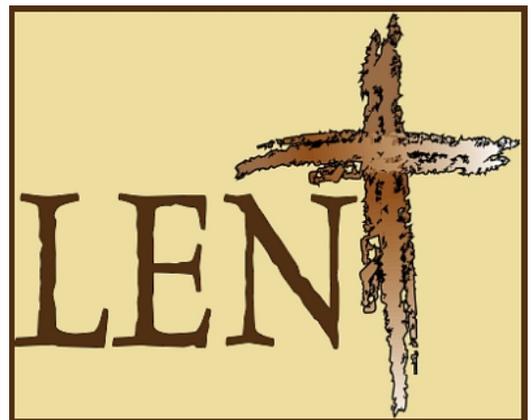
As I write this, I realize that when you are reading it, we will already be into this Lenten season of joy. “Joy?” You say. “Lent? Joyful?” Of course. We have said, haven’t we, that Lent is a time for growing closer to Christ. What could be more joyful than that? “But,” you may say, “I thought Lent was supposed to be solemn. After all, we “bury the Alleluia”, sing more contemplative, less celebratory hymns, and some people even “give up” something they usually enjoy. Why do that if we are joyful?”

Well, let me ask you this: “When do you most appreciate a favorite food - when you are full or when you are hungry?” I have heard it said, and I agree, that continuous feasting, without some fasting, is gluttony. How can we fully appreciate the festive season of Easter without the meditative preparation of Lent? Can we truly celebrate the great Paschal Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord without experiencing Good Friday?

But that doesn’t mean that Lent is not joyful. To paraphrase Catherine of Sienna who said, “All the way to heaven is heaven,” “all the way to joy, is joy.” That is the whole point. The joy we have in Christ is always ours, no matter what is going on in our lives or in our world. It can never be taken away from us. We can experience loss, pain, and sorrow, but deep down where we live, there is Christ, there is joy!

Please remember the Discipleship Committee has devotional materials available for your personal devotions, as well as Prayer Partners if desired.

May you have a blessed and joyful Lent!



Worship and Music



With sadness I need to tell the members of St. Stephen's that Jim Horan, our music director will be leaving us on March 1, 2024. All of us have enjoyed our time with Jim and his wonderful playing. You were a gift to us. We do wish you the best in your next adventures and know that you are always welcomed here.



On the other side I need to ask you to pray for St. Stephens in our search for a new director. If you would like to be on the committee in our search, if you know anyone that may be interested in the job or anyone that is available to play for any of the time, please speak to me on any Sunday, call me at 732-429-9123 or email me at enewton2@gmail.com. Music is such a part of our church.

Eloise Newton, Worship & Music Chairman

POP-UP PANTRY



Thanks to all who donated this month.

Suggestions to donate for this month are:

- **Peanut Butter**
- **Jelly**
- **Jell-O**

We thank everyone for their continued support.

Judy Ziccardi





Holy Week

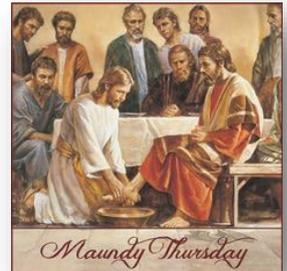


Sunday, March 24, 2024

10:30 AM - Palm Sunday Worship

Thursday, March 28, 2024

7:30 PM - Maundy Thursday Worship



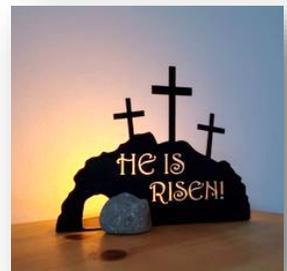
Good Friday, March, 29, 2024

12:00 PM - Seven Last Words

7:30 PM - Tenebrae Service

Sunday, March 31, 2024

10:30 AM - Easter Worship



March

Servant Leaders

Offering Counters:

1st Sunday of the Month - Pat Klatt/Judy Ziccardi

2nd Sunday of the Month - Bob Newman/Randy Gerling

3rd Sunday of the Month - Linda Nietman/Linda Hansen

4th Sunday of the Month - Miriam Skrzypczak/Frank Gianneschi

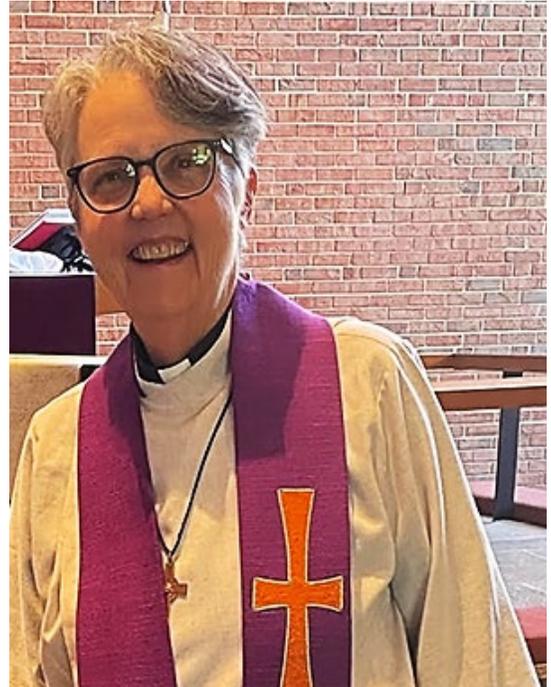
5th Sunday of the Month - Craig and Jane Busch

				Palm Sunday	Maundy Thursday	Good Friday	Easter Sunday
	March 3	March 10	March 17	March 24	March 28	March 29	March 31
Altar Guild	Bob and Cathy Newman	Mariam Skrzpczak and Pat Benward	Donna Hussey and Audrey Oddman	Judy Ziccardi and Sharon Gianneschi	Bob and Cathy Newman	Mariam Skrzpczak and Pat Benward	Donna Hussey and Audrey Oddman
Ushers	Gianneschi Family	Gerling Family	Merring Family	Newman Family	Gerling Family	7:30 pm Yao Family	Gianneschi Family
Worship Assistants	Richard Newton, Jr.	Effil Hemmings	Randy Gerling	Linda Nietman	Pat Klatt	12:00 pm Linda Nietman 7:30 pm Frank Gianneschi	Bill Cochrane

Greetings from our New Member, Pastor Carol Lindsay

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you very sincerely for the warm welcome you have given me. For the past 35 years I have served as a Pastor in the NJ Synod shepherding congregations in various counties as a regularly called pastor and as an intentional interim. Retirement began for me on August 1, 2023 and it has been an adjustment. Coming to St. Stephen's has provided me with a "soft landing." As soon as I walked in the door, I saw people from different congregations I had served - St. Luke's, Dunellen***, Cross of Life, Plainfield, Zion in Carteret. Last summer I completed over 21 years of ministry at Calvary in Cranford - where Pastor Gunnar Anderson is now vice pastor - yet another connection with folks from St. Peter's, North Plainfield! St. Stephen's has quickly become a wonderful, new church home for me. I am grateful to the Lord for guiding me to you and I am thankful to each one of you along with Pastor Janak and our Musician, Jim Horan for the friendship and service we share in Christ. My partner of 31 years, Jeanne Elmuccio, serves as your Church Secretary - yet another link between our family and yours.



In closing I would like to answer a question that some of you have asked me - "what should we call you?" I would like to be called Pastor Carol, PC or Pastor C - whichever you prefer. If you call me Pastor that refers to who I continue to be in the ELCA and our Synod and is not a reference to my being your pastor. I hope this makes sense to most of you. This issue is part of my journey as a retired minister as I continue to serve Christ's Church in a variety of ways.

Our Pastor, Pastor Janak, the ministry of St. Stephen's and the Lenten Journey we share is uppermost in my prayers,

The Rev. Dr. Carol A. Lindsay
(new member)

P.S. Thank you for your prayers & support during my recent vascular procedures !!

***Pastor Charlie Mingle and his wife, Jean, were members of mine in Dunellen following his retirement from St. Stephen's many years ago...



EASTER FLOWERS & MEMORIAL GIFT LIST



For lilies and tulips – indicate the quantity of you wish to order.

_____ Lilies (s) @ \$ 12.00 each – total for Lilies: \$ _____

_____ Tulips (s) @ \$ 7.50 each – – total for Tulips: \$ _____

For gifts, indicate the amount you wish to give towards:

Capital Improvements \$ _____

Lutheran World Relief \$ _____

St. Stephen’s Food Pantry \$ _____

Other (please specify) \$ _____



Total amount for Easter flowers and/or memorial gifts. \$ _____

Your name _____

Please list my gift as: ___in memory of ___in thanksgiving for ___in honor of

By _____

_____to the glory of the Christ Child

By _____

Please complete this form and return it to the church office or place in the offering plate along with your payment. Checks are to be made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. **Deadline for order form is Sunday, March 17, 2024.** Lilies and tulips may be taken home after the worship service on Easter Sunday.



Join Pastor František Janák for this Work of the People film series with Rev. René August on how the love of the Divine can be made present through storytelling, understanding power and seeking justice.

JOIN ON ZOOM AT 7:30 PM

AT

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/STEPHEN_LENT2024](https://bit.ly/stephen_lent2024)

February 21, '24: Session One // Interrogating Narratives

February 28, '24: Session Two // A Declaration of Power

March 6, '24: Session Three // Creating Bigger Stories

March 13, '24: Session Four // Proximity to Power

March 20, '24: Session Five // Creating Goodness Together



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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					5:00 pm ACC	10:00 am IESDAC
3 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion 5:00 pm ACC	4	5	6 10:00 am ACC recording 6:30 pm Lenten Prayer Service	7	8 5:00 pm ACC	9 10:00 am IESDAC
10 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30 Newsletter items due 5:00 pm ACC	11	12	13 10:00 am ACC recording	14	15 5:00 pm ACC	16 10:00 am IESDAC
17 Newsletter distributed 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion 11:30 Worship & Music Mtg 5:00 pm ACC	18	19 7:30 pm Council Meeting	20 10:00 am ACC recording 5:00 pm Pop-Up Pantry	21	22 5:00 pm ACC	23 10:00 am IESDAC
24 PALM SUNDAY 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion 5:00 pm ACC	25	26	27 10:00 am ACC recording	28 MAUNDY THURSDAY 7:30 pm Maundy Thursday Service	29 GOOD FRIDAY 12:00 pm Seven Last Words 5:00 pm ACC 7:30 pm Tenebrae Service	30 10:00 am IESDAC
31 EASTER SUNDAY 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion 11:30 am Coffee and Refreshments 5:00 pm ACC						

