



CELTIC EVENSONG AND COMMUNION

at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

The Fourth Sunday of Advent ☩ December 21, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

Welcome to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. We welcome and include all people without exception and invite you to participate fully in worship and after the service to enjoy the community supper in the fellowship hall. Throughout this bulletin, helpful guidance is printed in italics. Nursery care is available (infant-4); speak with a door greeter. Visitor Guides are found at entrances. When you want to be known here, place a Welcome card (in all pews, or submit online) in the basket in the center aisle. The church is open for prayer from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Thursday. From 5:10 on Sundays, the church is ready for prayer and rest. Please observe silence inside the church and thank you for remembering to "silence" all devices.

Prelude *New Britain*

arr. John Purifoy

Please stand at the sound of the bell, as you are able.

Opening

Thomas Merton

The Advent mystery is the beginning of the end of all in us that is not yet Christ.

Silence is held after the reading.

Hymn Unexpected and mysterious

Sung by all, standing as able.

St. Helena

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1. Un-ex-pect-ed and mys-te-rious is the gen-tle
2. In a mo-men-tar-y mee-ing of e-ter-ni-ty
3. We are called to pon-der mys-t'ry and a-wait the

word of grace. Ev-er-lov-ing and sus-tain-ing is the peace of
ty and time, Mar-y learned that she would car-ry both the mor-tal
com-ing Christ, to em-bod-y God's com-pas-sion for each frag-ile

God's em-brace. If we fal-ter in our cour-age
and di-vine. The she learned of God's com-pas-sion,
hu-man life. God is with us in our long-ing

and we doubt what we have known, God is faith-ful
of E-liz-a-beth's great joy, and she ran to
to bring heal-ing to the earth, while we watch with

to con-sole us as a moth-er tends her own,
greet the wom-an who would rec-og-nize her boy.
joy and won-der for the prom-ised Sav-ior's birth.

A Prayer for the Evening

In the quiet of this place
in the dark of the night
we wait and watch.

In the stillness of the soul
and from its fathomless depths
the senses of our hearts are awake to you.

For fresh soundings of life
for new showings of light
we search in the silence of your Spirit, O God. **Amen.**

The Reading Matthew 1:18-25 *Please sit.*

Reader A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Silence is held for one minute of reflection.

Reflection Valerie Abbott

Silence is held for two minutes of reflection.

Music for Meditation O come, O come, Emmanuel

arr. J. Bert Carlson

Prayers for Ourselves and Others *Please stand.*

from *The Book of Common Prayer of Ireland*

Deacon God has promised to hear the prayers of those who ask in faith; therefore, let us pray for the Church and the world.

In the silence following each petition the people may add their prayers either silently or aloud.

Leader Lord of your people: strengthen and renew your Church in all the world, and build us up in faith and love.

Leader Lord of creation: look with favor on the world you have made, and guide the nations in the ways of justice and of peace.

Leader Lord of relationship: comfort and sustain the communities in which we live and work; help us to love our neighbors as ourselves; enable us to serve our families and friends, and to love one another as you love us.

Leader Lord of healing: relieve and protect all who suffer in body, spirit, and mind; sustain and deliver all who know danger, violence, or suffering throughout the world, [especially ____].

- Leader** Lord of blessing: receive our thanks and gratitude for the ways you fill our lives with goodness, faith, hope, opportunity and every nourishment and comforting kindness, [especially ____].
- Leader** Lord of life: in the strong hope of resurrection in Christ, come near to all who grieve at the loss or death of beloved ones, [especially for ____].
- Leader** Lord of eternity: bind us together by your Holy Spirit in communion with your saints, that we may entrust ourselves, and one another, and our whole life to you. **Amen.**

Candle Lighting, Additional Prayers

Lighting candles is as potent a symbol of offering one's prayer to God as candlelight is of God's abiding presence. All may light a votive at any station, now and hereafter. This Church is open daily for prayer and rest, and a permanent votive station is located near the piano in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

Music for Meditation Watchman, tell us of the night Welsh hymn, arr. Anne Krentz Organ

Hymn O Lord, hear my prayer Jacques Berthier

The congregation will repeat the refrain several times.



The Grace Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly. **Amen.** *- Isaiah 58:6-8a*

The Peace May Christ, the Good Shepherd, bind us with a bond of love that cannot be broken. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

All greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying "peace."

Welcome and Announcements

The Holy Communion

All comes from God, so from all God has given into our care, we offer gifts from our gratitude. Please place offerings into the basket near the baptismal font or food pantry items into the baskets by the main entrance, or make a gift online by scanning the QR code or texting STSTEPHENSVA to 73256.



At the Offertory Late December, Ellis Island

Phil Coulter

The Great Thanksgiving *Please stand.*

In This Season of Waiting, Iona Community

Celebrant O come, O come, Emmanuel.

People **God comes among us.**

Celebrant Let us give our hearts to God.

People **This is right and good.**

Celebrant The story of Emmanuel is the story of God – waiting to inhabit time, who took on flesh and form, and lived among us, so that we might re-imagine life.

It is the story of Jesus – waiting to be betrayed, who shared supper with his friends who took bread, offered the blessing, and said,

All **“This is my own body given for you. Do this, and know that I am with you.”**

Celebrant Then pouring, blessing, and sharing wine so that we might re-imagine love, he said,

All **“This is my life-blood poured out for you. Do this, and know that I am with you.”**

Celebrant It is the story of Christ – waiting in the tomb for God’s moment, who threw down the gates of hell and drew the sting of death so that we might re-imagine the world. It is the story of one who knows what it is to wait, and who shows us what it is to wait well.

And so, taking this bread and wine, we remember and celebrate the waiting which began to change the world; and we join our voices with all who still wait and work for that change to come to completion as we sing:

Sanctus

Sung by all.

William Trafka

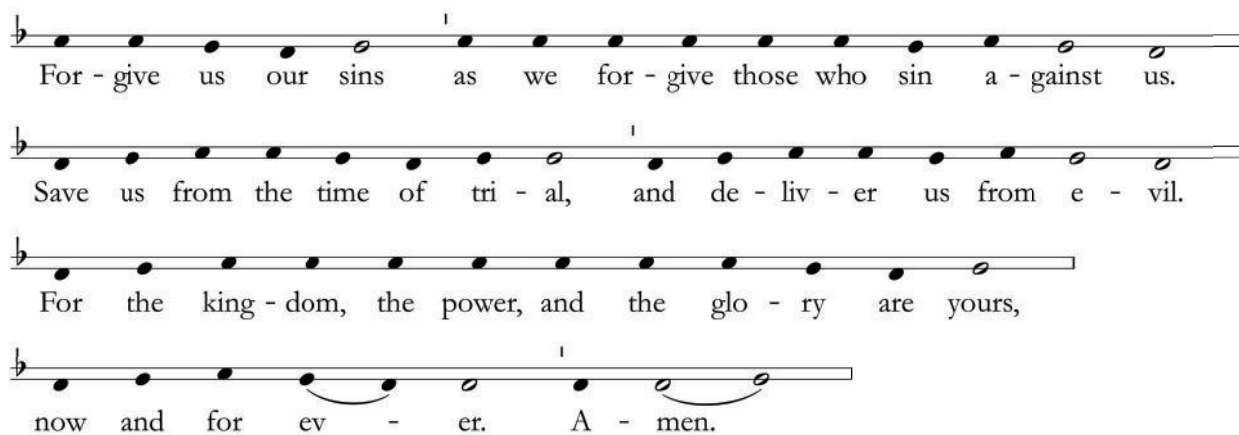
Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho -
san-na in the high - est. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Celebrant And as we follow the example of Jesus, send down your Holy Spirit on us, and on these gifts of bread and wine, that we may find the imagination, the courage and the strength to use our waiting times to build God’s Kingdom of joy, justice and peace.

People **Blessed be God, blessed be Son, blessed be Holy Spirit, now and ever. AMEN.**

The Lord’s Prayer

Cantor
As our Sa - vior Christ has taught us, we now pray,
All
Our Fa - ther in hea - ven, hal - lowed be your Name,
your king - dom come, your will be done, on earth as in hea - ven.
Give us to - day our dai - ly bread.



The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the bread. A period of silence is held.

Sung by all.

William Trafka



Translation: Give us your peace.

The Invitation

Celebrant

This is the 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.

At the Communion of the People

All who seek God's presence through Communion or God's blessing are welcome to come forward. Extend your hands, one upon another, to receive a bread wafer (request gluten-free) or, to receive God's blessing instead, cross your arms over your chest in an "X". Wine for sipping is offered next to the bread or dip the edge of your wafer in the small cup by the pillars. **Healing prayer and anointing** are offered to all at the side chapels from the beginning of Communion through the end of the service. More information is found at the end of this bulletin.

Music for Communion

The angel Gabriel from heaven came
 The deserted garden
 Some children see him

Basque carol, arr. Anne Krentz Organ
 Florence Price
 George Winston

After Communion

Please stand.

from *In this Season of Waiting*, Wild Goose Publications

Celebrant

The earth still waits for its healing...

All

**May we who are part of that waiting
take and use the dreaming times
to re-imagine the world;
inhabit and use the liminal times
to discover the patterns of God;
embrace and use the quickening times
to learn how to live and love;
thus may our watching and waiting
join with that of Emmanuel
to realize God's Kingdom
here on earth. Amen.**

The Blessing

Celebrant

Now, may the Lord Christ go before you to prepare your way;
Christ beside you, be companion to you everywhere you go;
Christ beneath you, strengthen and uphold you when you fall or fail;
Christ behind you, finish and complete what you must leave undone;
Christ within you, give you faith and courage, love and hope;
And Christ above you, bless and keep you, now and evermore. **Amen.**

Hymn

If in your heart

Ana Hernández

The congregation will repeat the refrain as the cantor sings the verses.

If in your heart you make a manger for his birth, then
God will once a - gain be - come a child on earth, If
in your heart you make a manger for his birth, then
God will once a - gain be - come a child on earth.

Verses: If in your heart you make a manger for his birth, then God will once again become a child on earth. *Gaudeamus...pares forma...transeamus...Alleluia!* (*Translation:* Let us rejoice...equal in form...let us go...Alleluia!)

Dismissal

Deacon

Go out into the world in peace, have courage, hold on to what is good, return no one evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering, honor everyone, love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

People

Thanks be to God.

Please sit for the Music for Meditation.

Music for Meditation Of the Father's love begotten

arr. Scott Hyslop

Postlude Ye Banks and Braes

trad. Scottish, arr. Sunita Staneslow

During the postlude, you are welcome to remain to rest or pray, or to depart in silence.

Memorials

The flowers are given to the glory of God and in memory of Rebecca Holcomb Dickinson by Dr. and Mrs. Richard M. Clary and family; Mary Pearson Moore and Thomas Justin Moore, Jr., Carolyn and Howard McCue, Mary and Rives Fleming, Jr. and Jeannette Bray Moore by their family; and John W. Tadlock by his family. The vigil candle in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit is given in memory of the Rev. D. Donald Dunn III.

Participants

Celebrant: The Rev. John Jenkins; **Deacon:** The Rev. Cate Anthony; **Reflector:** Valerie Abbott; **Subdeacon:** Kim Spensieri; **Reader:** Sara Mackey; **Intercessor:** Dave Davis; **Chalice Bearers:** Howard Anderson, Chip Jamerson, Sarah Shutt, Susan Wilkes; **Musicians:** Matt Hassmer, *cantor*; Christine Ertell, *flute*; Diana Chou, *piano*

The Ministry of Healing Prayer at St. Stephen's Church

TO PRESENT YOURSELF FOR HEALING PRAYER OR ANOINTING: Healing ministers are located in both side chapels from the time people receive communion until after the service concludes. Go to either side chapel either after receiving communion or a blessing, or at any time following irrespective of what else is happening in the service. Because these ministries will continue through the end of the service, please respect those in prayer by exiting in silence from any of the rear doors. Whether or not you participate in these ministries tonight, you may contribute to the work of healing prayer by offering your personal prayers for yourself and that all who worship here may experience the healing love of God in their lives and bear that love into the world for its healing.

HEALING PRAYER: If you wish to sit for a moment with a healing prayer minister, it is helpful if you share your name and the concern for which you ask God's healing. The minister will lay hands on your shoulders, join with you in silently opening ourselves to God, and offering your prayer concern to the healing One who is with us always. This is not a ministry of magical incantations. It is simply about fellow pilgrims opening ourselves more completely to God's presence and healing love.

ANOINTING: If you wish to receive anointing with healing oil, approach the anointer with you palms open and extended. She or he will mark your hand with the sign of the cross and offer a simple prayer for your healing.

Healing ministries of prayer and anointing have been practiced by Christians from the very beginning. God's grace is freely given to all people for the healing of spirit, mind, and body, and these practices provide ways for us to present ourselves just as we are with open hands and open hearts. We do not believe in magical incantations. Instead, these sacramental acts are simply about fellow pilgrims opening ourselves more completely to the healing love of God.

The Parish Prayer List

Leilani Allwine, Patricia Atkins-Smith, Sue Atkinson, Robert Baker, Elizabeth Bannerman, Lash Barksdale, Nancy Beale, *Linda Bennett*, Ken Blaisdell, Christine Boeteger, Genie Borum, Julia Bouck, Gene Bowles, Sturges Brian, Leslie Brockman, Alex H. Brown, Pat Brown, Sarah Jo Bryce, Turner Bruneau, Matt Boyd, Patti Bullen, Tammy Carleton, Scott Carnohan, Paula Chambers, *Michael Click*, Nancy Cole, Sarah Cole, Susan Collier, Mary Cooke, Prior Cooper, Kathy Conrad, John Corey, Don Cowles, Michelle Crim, the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, *Debbie Cuseo*, Chris Davis, Patricia Delany, Jackie Dering, Ham DeRosa, Terry Dickinson, Davis Dunn Dillard, Susan Dull, Guy Frank, April Greenwood, Janis Hall, Rodger Hardy, Katie Hellebush, Dan Hill, Anna Hurdle, Alan Jamesieson, Lena Jones, Justin Jones-Nickerson, Jane Kelly, Dana King, Linda Lewis, Genie Lucyk, Joy Luke, Margaret Lyle, Pam Lynch, Ross Mackenzie, Barbara Mathison, Satin Matthews, Adrienne Maxwell, Michael McCabe, Schnucki McCabe, Morgan McCall, Stratton and Robin McCrady, Gertrude McLean, Nancy Meath, Jack Miller, Mary Miller, B. Millner, Susan Minyard, Sallie Moncol, *Carolyn Mae Morgan*, Ashley Nickerson, Mary Beth Noel, Sallie Nolte, Jan Orgain, Tricia Payne, Beth Pearce, Ernest Perry, Courtney Phillips, Scott Pittman, Lyn Presson, *Alma Price*, Luke Robertson, Ramona Ransone, Jason R., Ray, Jennifer Reed, Aleta Richards, Ryan Rohadfox, Kaley Rosenthal, Robert Sass, James Saunders and Harriet Covey, Melissa Schick, T. Logan Scott, Todd Shelton, Bette Shiflett, Maj. David Shuford, Jr., Chrys Sills, Aiden Thomas Smith, Regena Stith, Margaret Thompson, Kenneth Valke, Timothy W., Ozzie Wade, Suzanne Wallace, Tom White, Terri Wilcox, Donna Williams, Steve Williams, Martha Wilson, Claire Wood, Emily H. Wood, Rosalyn Wootten, Sue Wootton, Young, Margaret P. Young. **For the blessings of this life**, especially *the birth of Murphy McCabe Williams to Guy and Elizabeth Williams*. **For those who have died**, especially *V. Cassel Adamson, Jr. and Ida Hall*. **For those expecting a child**, especially Maddie and Matthew Clites, Ian Hayes and Corinne Torres, Preston and Cate Kendig, and Michelle and Dane Olsson. **For our missionaries**, Heidi Schmidt and Monica Vega, and the people they serve in Argentina. **In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer**, we pray for the *Anglican Church of Burundi*. **For ReWork Richmond. For an end to gun violence. For peace and reconciliation** in Haiti, Iraq, Iran, Israel/Palestine, Nigeria, North Korea, South Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine, and at our borders. **For those serving overseas in the military or diplomatic service:** CPT Anna Broadbent-Evelyn, Lt. Jonathan Dean Hudson, and Lt. Alex Whitmire.

Names in italics were added to the prayer list this week.

In order to keep our prayer list current and facilitate the intentionality and mindfulness with which we pray, we print names on the list for three months or less. If you would like for someone to remain on the list for more (or less) time, please call the office or email Kitty Ball at kball@ststephensRVA.org.

Prayers and blessings adapted from the following sources: The Northumbria Community, Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community, Harper Collins, © 2002; Intercessions for the Christian People, The Liturgical Press, ©1990; A New Zealand Prayer Book, Harper Collins, © 1997; Philip Newell, Celtic Benediction: Morning and Night Prayer, William B. Eardmans Publishing Company, © 2000; Iona Community, Iona Community Worship Book. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, © 2017; Wild Goose Worship Group, Big Book of Liturgies, Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, © 2023. Rite Planning, © 2021, by Church Publishing Incorporated, all rights reserved, used by permission. All copyrighted music by permission, under OneLicense #A710911.