

Coming Up



LONGEST NIGHT

Friday, December 22nd at 6pm

We will provide a space for sadness in the midst of cheer with music and meditations to honor loss and grief. Please invite those who need a time to acknowledge darkness in this season of light.

CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT AND WORSHIP

Sunday, December 24 at 4pm

This year's intergenerational pageant is perfect for all ages. Share simple stories, prayers, and lots of Christmas carols. Come between 3:30 and 3:45 to join the pageant and for a carol sing-a-long.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT EUCHARIST

Sunday, December 24th at 7pm

Our later service will feature guitar and flute and a chance to sing some of your favorite carols. Sing Silent Night surrounded by the glow of candlelight as we celebrate Christmas.



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A few days before Halloween, Carol stopped by a department store to get a small accessory for one of the girl's Halloween costumes. She texted me from the store with a picture of our daughter in front of stacks of boxes of lights and Christmas decorations. "Too late," she wrote, "They already got out the Christmas stuff."

It breaks my heart that we live in a culture that has come to equate the birth of Jesus with the buying and selling of sparkly things. To be clear, I like sparkles as much as the next girl. (Although please don't ever give my children glitter. That's another story.) Still, I want for Christmas to be about more than just how many lights we can cram onto the house, how many cookies we can cram into our mouths, and how many gifts we can cram under the tree.

As you may know, one of my favorite holiday films, "What Would Jesus Buy?" follows a group of performance artists called Rev. Billy and the Stop Shopping Gospel Choir as they seek to show the negative impacts of overconsumption. From that movie, a movement called the Advent Conspiracy began, which encourages people to worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all- to reorient our Christmas preparations from things to people and to our faith.

This Advent, I hope you will join us in re-orienting as well. Our worship on Sundays in December will begin with silence at 9:50. For those who wish to participate, there will be opportunities for praying by walking the labyrinth, exploring art, and lighting candles. Our formation opportunities will help us to remember what the story of Christmas means, and we will have many opportunities to give back to our community. I can't promise that our fellowship gatherings won't have too many Christmas cookies. But I can promise that at St. Stephen's we want a chance to get to know you better- not how much money you have to spend on gifts or how good you are at baking holiday treats.

Christ is coming to make all things new. May he help you be made new as we prepare for his birth this season.

Rector's Report:
It's Beginning to
Look a Lot Like
Advent
The Rev. Kate Bradsen



Advent at St. Stephen's

You can't do it all, but you can find a way to prepare for Christmas with St. Stephen's with [worship and formation](#), [service](#), and [fun](#). Explore the events of each week and join us for those that work best for you.

1st Week of Advent

Greening of the Church

Saturday, December 2nd @9am

Join us for preparing our church for the holiday season. There are tasks for all abilities and a festive lunch will be served.

Advent Faith Formation

Sunday, December 3rd @9am

Before Christmas: Exploring the context of Jesus' arrival.

What was first century Israel/Palestine like? What were the people of that time expecting from the birth of the Messiah? Explore scripture, history, and share your own experiences of waiting during this season.

A visit from St. Nicolas

Sunday, December 3rd @10am

Our first worship of the Advent season will feature a visit from jolly old St. Nic. We'll learn about his story and the true origins of Santa Claus. Join us as we begin this holiday season.

Greeter/Usher Training

Sunday, December 3rd @11:30am

A quick update on greeting and ushering as we prepare for the Christmas season. Also a great time for new people to join the team!

Christmas Pageant Practice

Sunday, December 3rd @11:45am

ALL children are welcome to participate in the Christmas Pageant which is part of the 4 PM Christmas Eve service on Sunday, December 24th. Children are encouraged to attend rehearsals to learn the music and the story. Rehearsals will be Sundays after the 10 AM service. Meet in the front of the church as close to 11:45 AM (allowing time for coffee hour!)

Serve at St. Clare's Ministry in Denver

Tuesday, December 5th @3pm

Join a group from St. Stephen's as we visit this ministry which serves weekly meals to those who are unhoused or experiencing poverty. Volunteers help serve food, do dishes and staff the clothing closet where people get toiletries and other basic necessities. We carpool from the church at 3pm and are usually back at 7pm. Questions? Please reach out to Jan Dunn.

Advent Retreat Day: Belonging

Saturday December 9, 8:30-12:30

Join us for a reflection on themes of belonging, hosted by our Daughters of the King chapter and led by the Rev. Lauren Grubaugh Thomas, an Episcopal priest who is currently planting a community near Foxborough. Lunch is provided and all are welcome to attend. This event is free, although donations are welcome.

Habitat for Humanity: Mountain View Homes

Saturday, December 9th

We will be serving lunch to volunteers and we also have the opportunity to volunteer at the work site. Join us for this event or speak with Peg Mancuso if you would like to be involved in the future.

Gastromartyrs' Christmas Party

Saturday, December 9th @6pm

Our Christmas Holiday gathering is at the home of Dave and Cissy Wetzberger. As always this gathering is open to all adults of the Parish, whether or not they are regular members of Gastromartyrs.

Please bring a side dish, appetizer or dessert to share along with your beverage of choice. The main dish will be provided.

2nd Week of Advent

Advent Faith Formation

Sunday, December 10th @9am

Before Christmas: Exploring the context of Jesus' arrival. A closer look at the stories of Mary and Elizabeth and those who were most intimately awaiting Jesus birth.

Christmas Pageant Practice

Sunday, December 10th @11:45am

(See first week of Advent for more details)

Fellowship Night

Sunday, December 10th 4-6pm

Join us for a special holiday themed youth group fellowship night. We'll have games and crafts, as well as supper. All ages are welcome!

3rd Week of Advent

Celebration of Gwen Blumenschein

Sunday, December 17th

Sadly, after seven years serving St. Stephen's, Gwen will be retiring at the end of this calendar year. Please join us in celebrating her ministry with a send off during worship and a festive coffee hour following church. If you would like to contribute towards a farewell gift from the congregation, please note Gwen in your donation memo.

Christmas Pageant Practice

Sunday, December 17th @11:45am

(See first week of Advent for more details)

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 23rd @11am

see page 4 for Week 4

4th Week of Advent

This year the fourth week of Advent is not even a day long. We will celebrate the 4th Sunday of Advent at 10am on Sunday, December 24th with a simple service- no sermon or music, but there will be communion and extra time for reflection.

As a reminder, our church offices are closed from December 25th- January 1st.



Above: Liz Rutledge playing flute. Listen for her again on December 17th. **At right:** Susanna Bradsen helps set the Nativity. Join us on Dec 2 to add your hands to our decorating. **Below:** Cathi Long and Cindy Stoeber at our most recent Ronald McDonald dinner. Look for more ways to serve this Advent on page 2.



Giving during Advent

Advent Outreach

Return by Sunday, December 17th

This year we are once again partnering with the Salvation Army to support families in need. You can bring a gift certificate or unwrapped toy or make a financial donation online or in the offering plate, noting Salvation Army in the memo. Thank you for supporting those in need in our community.



Christmas Appeal

In 2023 we have seen a wonderful generosity from St. Stephen's. Project Breathing Room increased our income by \$25K and our pledges for 2024 are right on target to get us close to a balanced budget. We have spent the year in discernment about what God is calling our church to, welcomed many new faces, and begun many new ministries.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, I hope you will remember what a special church community we have. Your giving helps us be a place where all people can grow in their spiritual journeys, find a sense of community, use their gifts, and offer healing to the wider community. Consider making a special gift this Christmas to help us end our calendar year without a deficit, so that we can continue the important work of St. Stephen's. You can mark Christmas appeal in your online donation, check, or envelope.

LIBRARYREPORT

Work on the Wolfrum Library is proceeding apace, and while I have put only a fraction of the books in order, the library is getting more user friendly with time. I am using an ad hoc system of ordering; standards like Dewey and Library of Congress systems, designed to systematize all of human writing, are too compressed for a specialized library. The sections are identified by labels, starting with Bibles of various translations, Bible study material (both comprehensive and individual books) and Bible references, such as concordances. Please feel free to avail yourselves of these materials, those in order as well as those pending classification; either read on the spot, or take material home on the honor system. Per standard library procedure, please do not reshelve after use, place on the shelf marked for returns. Thanks to all, especially Gwen, for your forbearance during the transition. - Don Henry, Librarian

Of the making of many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

- Ecclesiastes

