

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay & Central Valley

(A Congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession)

www.ststephenclc.org

**Worshiping Every Sunday in the East Bay at 9 a.m. in
Grace Lutheran Church
1836 B St., Hayward, CA 94541-3140**

Worshiping in the Central Valley at 2 p.m. - 1st & 3rd Sundays of
the Month

Atria Senior Living - Bayside Landing - 1st Floor Activity Room
3318 Brookside Rd., Stockton, CA 95219

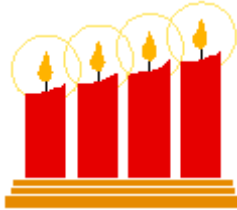
Pastor: Steven Karp

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Organist: Elizabeth Karp

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The Fourth Sunday In Advent - 20 December 2015 –

A Service with Holy Communion

(Visitors are asked to speak with the Pastor before communing)

Liturgy — Page 15 in The Lutheran Hymnal

HYMNS: 62 Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel
69 Arise, Sons Of The Kingdom (1-4 & 5-6)
66 Hark The Glad Sound, The Savior Comes

Sermon Text: Philippians 4,4-9

Sermon Theme: The Lord is Near!

1. Jesus is Near To Us In His Birth
2. Jesus is Near To Us In His Forgiveness
3. Jesus is Near To Us To Give Us Peace

INTROIT: Drop down, you heavens, from above: and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open: and bring forth salvation. The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament shows His handiwork. **Glory be to the Father ...**

COLLECT: Lord God, heavenly Father, it is good and right that we should give thanks to You, that You have given us a glorious Baptism like that of John the Baptist, and that therein You have promised us the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and everlasting life through Your Son, Jesus Christ: We beseech You, by Your grace and mercy preserve us in such faith, that we never doubt Your promise, but be comforted by our Baptism in all temptations; and grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may renounce sin, and ever continue in the righteousness bestowed on us in Baptism, until by Your grace, we obtain our eternal salvation; through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever the One true God, world without end. **Amen.**

Old Testament

Isaiah 40,1–8

“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

² “Speak kindly to Jerusalem;

And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,

That her iniquity has been removed,
That she has received of the LORD's hand
Double for all her sins."

³ A Voice is calling,
"Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
⁴ Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
⁵ Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
⁶ A voice says, "Call out."
Then He answered, "What shall I call out?"
All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the
flower of the field.
⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the Word of our God stands forever.

Epistle

Philippians 4,4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is
near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer
and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be
made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which
surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever is

true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is
pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if
there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let
your mind dwell on these things. ⁹ The things you have
learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice
these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

GRADUAL

For the LORD has built up Zion;
He has appeared in His glory.
You will arise and have compassion on Zion;
**For it is time to be gracious to her, for the
appointed time has come.**
For He looked down from His holy height;
From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,
To hear the groaning of the prisoner;
To set free those who were doomed to death;
That men may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem.
Hallelujah! Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies,
For they have been ever of old. [sing: triple Hallelujah!]

The Holy Gospel

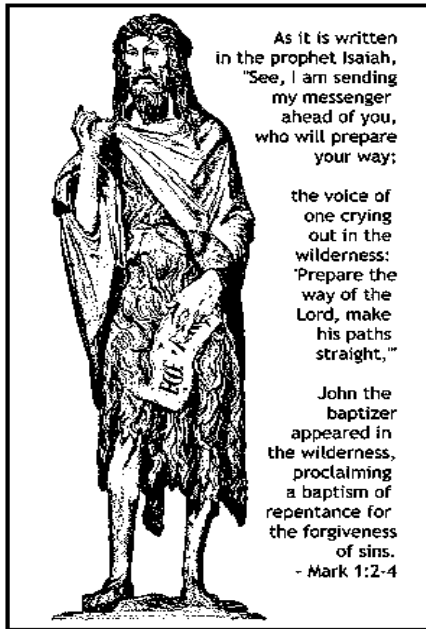
John 1,6-8 & 19-28

Response: **Glory be to Thee, O Lord!**

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was
John. ⁷ He came for a witness, that He might bear witness
of the Light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was
not the Light, but came that he might bear witness of the
Light.

¹⁹ And this is the witness of John, when the Jews
sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,
"Who are you?" ²⁰ And he confessed, and did not deny, and

he confessed, "I am not the Christ."²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."²² They said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer



to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.²⁵

And they asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"²⁶ John answered them saying, "I Baptize in water, but

among you stands One Whom you do not know."²⁷ It is He Who comes after me, the thong of Whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."²⁸ These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. [Scripture passages are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation, used by permission]

Response: Praise be to Thee, O Christ!

† † †

Lessons for 27 December – The First Sunday After Christmas

Old Testament: Isaiah 11.1–5
 Epistle: Galatians 4,1–7
 The Holy Gospel: Luke 2,33–40

Weekly Scripture Verse: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! The Lord is near. (Philippians 4,4–5)

Today's Gradual is based on selected verses from Psalm 102.

Next Service in STOCKTON: Today at 2 p.m.

Christmas Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve Carol Service on **24 December** at 12:30 p.m. in **Stockton**.

Children's Christmas Eve Service at Mountain View, 24 December at 5 p.m.

Christmas Day Service on **25 December** at 9 a.m. in **Hayward**.

Bible Study – Hayward – No Bible study this Tuesday. The next Bible study in Hayward will be on Tuesday, 5 January, at 2 p.m.

ILL. In your prayers, please remember Nancy, Roy and his brother, Gerald; Jean Niblett; Marlene Clappier; Don Luebke, Don's nephew Leigh, and Rose, one of Don's care givers; Sue (the Karps' neighbor who is undergoing chemotherapy), Sue (Carolyn's friend), Don Drews; Richard Hocker; Ruth Scheuermann; James Sandeen; the Breeden twins, Chloe and Dagny; Pr. Doug



Priestap (Calgary); Pr. Robert List (Spokane); Pr. Karp.

Call News — The Rev. Walter Schaller, pastor of Mount Zion Lutheran, Madison Heights MI, has announced his intent to retire from the public ministry but plans to serve the congregation until the Spirit provides a new shepherd. The congregation has called the Rev. Mark Weis, pastor of Church of the Lutheran Confession, North Port, FL; Pastor Weis has returned the Call. The Commissioning of CLC Foreign Missionary Peter Evensen took place at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, 18 December, at Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI. Gethsemane Lutheran, Spokane Valley, WA, has called the Rev. Wayne Eichstadt, co-pastor at Immanuel Lutheran, Mankato, MN.

The O Antiphons. These seven antiphons were used in the early Church for the seven days



preceding Christmas. They were already in use by the eighth century but date to an earlier period. They refer to the Old



Testament names for Jesus. Four of these antiphons are in the first lines of the hymn, “Oh Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel.” thus, “O, Emmanuel” is an antiphon. The

antiphon in the second stanza of the hymn is “O, Rod of Jesse” (which is also given as “O, Root of Jesse”). The antiphon in the third stanza is “O

Dayspring from on high,” which refers to Luke 1,78, in which Zacharias, the father of the John the Baptist, refers to the coming Messiah as the “Dayspring from on high.”



The antiphon on the fourth stanza is “O Key of David,” which is based on Revelation 3,7 and Isaiah 22,15–24, in which Jesus Himself holds this key, which means that He is the only one who can open the door to God’s kingdom of Grace and life eternal.

Reports Due. Reports from committee chairman should be given to Timothy Blank by the new year. The installation of new officers for 2016 will take place at the 9 a.m. service in Hayward on 10 January and a council meeting will be held after the service. Committee chairman should have their boards constituted by this time.

New Officers for 2016. At our Annual Meeting on Sunday, 29 November, the following were elected as officers for 2016:

President	Timothy Blank
Vice President	Jim Niblett
Treasurer	Jim Niblett
Secretary	Jim Niblett
Financial Secretary	Roy Cameron
Elders	Jim Niblett
Education	Roy Cameron
Missions	Timothy Blank
Property	Dr. Richard Colbert

Many thanks to Don Luebke for his decades of dedicated service to our congregation. Because of health problems, he decided that he would not stand for office.

Pastor Emeritus Arvid G.W. Gullerud. On Friday morning, it pleased almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our

departed brother, Arvid Gullerud. Memorial service arrangements are pending. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; ... they ... rest from their labors and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14,13).

Katharina von Bora Luther (29 January 1499 – 20 December 1552). Katherina von Bora was born to minor and probably



Lucas Cranach's portrait of Katharina von Bora Luther - 1526

impoverished Saxon nobility in Lippendorf; her father was Hans the Younger von Bora and her mother Anna von Bora, neé von Haugwitz. Her mother died when she was five. In 1508, her father placed her in the Cistercian convent at Nimbschen, where a maternal aunt was the Mother Superior. In 1515, she took her vows as a nun. While there, she learned to read and write and also learned Latin.

With the coming of the Reformation, Katharina and other nuns became interested in reform and contacted Luther and asked for his assistance. Luther sent Leonhard Köppe, a town councilor and merchant of Torgau, and on Easter Eve 1523, after delivering barrels of herring to the convent, he smuggled the nuns out. They arrived in Wittenberg and within two years Luther was able to arrange marriages for all of the nuns except Katharina, who insisted that she would only marry Luther or Nikolaus von Amsdorf. On 13 June 1525 Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora married; witnesses included Justus Jonas, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Barbara and Lucas Cranach. John Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, gave them the “Black Cloister,” the

former Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg as a wedding present. When they married, Katharina was 26 years old and Luther was 42.

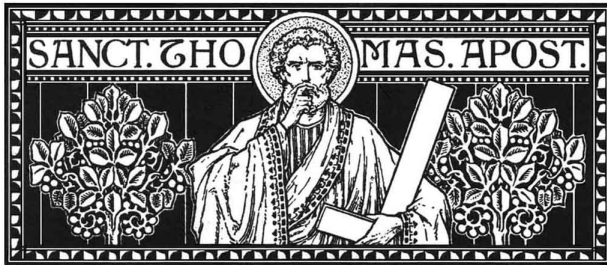
Katharina immediately took over running the household, administering and managing the holdings of the monastery, breeding and selling cattle, buying and selling land, and so forth. Luther called her “Katie, my Rib,” and “the Morning Star of Wittenberg” because of her habit of rising at 4 a.m. to discharge all of her responsibilities. In part, she had to be an effective manager because Luther was always taking in students and friends and money was always tight. When they were married, Albert, the Archbishop of Mainz and the person who had been responsible for Tetzels selling indulgences, sent them 2 gold gulden as a wedding present; which was a very generous gift. Luther told Katie to return the money; she didn’t.

In addition to managing the household, she also bore Luther six children: Johannes (Hans) (1526–75); Elizabeth (1527–28); Magalena (1529–42); Martin Jr. (1531–65), Paul (1533–93); and, Margarete (1534–70). In 1539 she also suffered a miscarriage. In addition to their own children, they also raised four orphans, including Katharina’s nephew.

After Luther’s death in 1546, she and the family were in dire financial straits. She was asked to move out of the Black Cloister to more modest circumstances but refused to do so. With the outbreak of the Schmalkaldic War, the family had to flee to Magdeburg. Even though she soon returned, she again had to flee in 1547; however, this time there was little to return to since enemy troops had burned her house down. The Elector of Saxony generously provided for her. With the outbreak of plague and famine in 1552, she fled to Torgau.

On the journey the horses bolted and she fell from the wagon, broke her hip, and died the next day. She is buried in the Marienkirche in Torgau. Even though she received financial help from Albrecht, Duke of Prussia and King Christian III of Denmark, it would appear that in her last years she lived in straightened financial circumstances and many of Luther's friends did not want to have much to do with her or the family.

Thomas, Apostle (21 December). All four Gospels mention St. Thomas as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. John's Gospel,

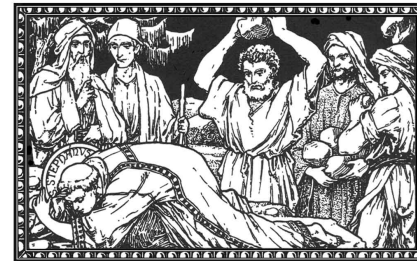


which calls him "the Twin," uses Thomas's questions to reveal truths about Jesus. It is Thomas who says, "Lord, we

do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" To this question Jesus replies, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14,5-6). John also relates how Thomas, on the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, doubted the report of the disciples that they had seen Jesus. Later, "doubting Thomas" became "believing Thomas" when he confessed Jesus as "my Lord and my God" (John 20,24-29). According to tradition, Thomas traveled eastward after Pentecost, eventually reaching India, where still today a group of people call themselves "Christians of St. Thomas." Thomas was martyred for the faith by being speared to death at Mylapore near Madras, India. Several spurious works are

attributed to Thomas, including the "Gospel of Thomas," which consists of epigrammatic and enigmatic sayings of Jesus, some of which parallel accounts in the real Gospels; this false Gospel was discovered among a collection of gnostic writings at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt and was probably written in Greek around AD 150. (Sources: Treasury of Daily Prayer, ed. Scot A. Kinnaman [St. Louis, CPH: 2006]: 1038-39; and, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F. L. Cross [New York, Oxford University Press, 1983): 1369-70)

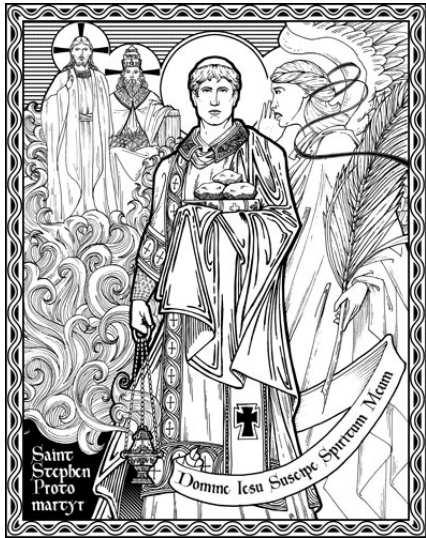
Stephen, Deacon & Martyr, 26 December. St. Stephen, "a man



full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6,5), was one of the Church's first seven deacons. As a Hellenized Jew, he was appointed by the leaders of the church to distribute food and other

necessities to the poor in the growing Christian community in Jerusalem, thereby giving the apostles more time for the public ministry of proclamation (Acts 6,2-5). He and the other deacons were expected not only to wait on tables but also to teach and preach. When some of his colleagues became jealous of him, they brought him to the Sanhedrin and falsely charged him with blaspheming against Moses (Acts 9-14). Stephen's confession of faith, along with his rebuke of the members of the Sanhedrin for rejecting their Messiah and

being responsible for His death, so infuriated them that they dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. Stephen is honored as the Church's first martyr and for the words of



his commendation and forgiveness as he lay dying: “Lord, receive my spirit” and “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7,59–60). As Stephen was being stoned, a young rabbi named Saul held the clothes of those who were doing the stoning (Acts 8,1; 22,20). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Stephen's understanding of the Temple and the Law in the light of

the death and resurrection of Jesus helped to lay the foundation for the universal proclamation of the Gospel and define Christianity as more than a Jewish sect. (Sources: Treasury of Daily Prayer, ed. Scot A. Kinnaman [St. Louis, CPH: 2006]: 1038; and, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F. L. Cross [New York, Oxford University Press, 1983]: 1308)

Holy Communion

Concerning Holy Communion, we believe, teach and confess that:

- a. in, with, and under the bread Jesus gives us His true Body;
- b. in, with, and under the wine Jesus gives us His true Blood;
- c. whoever receives Holy Communion, receives it either for salvation or for judgment;
- d. whoever believes the words, “given and shed for you...”, receives the Body and Blood of Christ for salvation;
- e. whoever does not believe the words, “given and shed for you...”, receives the Body and Blood of Christ to judgment;
- f. out of a pastoral concern for your soul, we ask that visitors speak with the pastor before receiving Holy Communion.



We practice Close Communion. We welcome those to the Lord's Supper who are baptized and confirmed members in good standing of our congregation and sister congregations within the Church of the Lutheran Confession. This reflects the practice of the ancient and apostolic church which opened the Lord's Table only to those who had been baptized and publicly confessed doctrinal agreement with all that Christ had commanded. If you are a visitor and would like to learn more about what we teach, please speak with Pastor Karp.