

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

All Are Welcome!

The Second Sunday After Christmas

January 4, 2026, 8:00 and 10:30 am Worship Services



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple

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

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

Prelude

How Far Is It to Bethlehem

C. Jessop

Ariel Roebuck ≈ soloist

Opening Prayer

Please stand.

Opening Hymn

As With Gladness

Hymnal 119

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped
to that lowly manger-bed;
there to bend the knee before
him whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek the mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
at that manger rude and bare;
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ! to thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus! every day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

The Word of God

Opening Acclamation

The People standing, the Celebrant says:

✠ Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People ***And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.***

The Celebrant and People continue

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise

S280

Glory to God: Gloria in excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father;
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect for The Second Sunday after Christmas

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

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

Celebrant Let us pray.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

People ***Amen.***

Please be seated.

The Lessons

May we hear the Word of God through these words.

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah 31:7–14

Thus says the LORD:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
“Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel.”

See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame, those with child and
those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,

I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;

say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."

For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,

over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;

their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,

says the LORD.

The Word of the Lord

People Thanks be to God.

Psalm 84 *To be read responsively by the Lay Reader and Congregation.*

L How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

C **The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.**

- L Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- C Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.**
- L Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
- C They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.**
- L LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
- C Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.**
- L For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, *
and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- C For the LORD God is both sun and shield; *
he will give grace and glory;**
- L No good thing will the LORD withhold *
from those who walk with integrity.
- C O LORD of hosts, *
happy are they who put their trust in you!]**

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 the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 1:3—6, 15—19a

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

The Word of the Lord

People Thanks be to God.

Please stand.

Gradual Hymn

We Three Kings

Hymnal 128

We three kings of Orient are,
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain,
moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

*O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!*

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King for ever,
ceasing never
over us all to reign.

Refrain

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 2:41—52

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

The parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem every year for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

The Gospel of the Lord

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Frankincense to offer have I:
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising,
gladly raising,
worship him, God Most High.

*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading,
still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!*

Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
heaven sings alleluia:
alleluia the earth replies.

Refrain



❖ Sermon Wilmot T. Merchant, II ❖

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 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.***

For Sarah, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Sean our Presiding Bishop, Ruth our Bishop, Wilmot our Priest, 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 Donald our President, Henry our Governor, and J.O. 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 the people in disaster and troubled areas and those affected by acts of violence here at home and all around the world. Let us also pray for the many volunteers who are working to assist our brothers and sisters in those areas that have been devastated either by man-made or natural disaster.

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.

Lord, in your mercy.

People Hear our prayer.

**Additional Prayers*

LET US GIVE THANKS FOR OUR VISITORS.

LET US PRAY FOR TRAVELERS THIS WEEK.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO: Linda Leonard (1/6), Bill Cole (1/8), Barbara Fredrick (1/9), Cheryl Brugier (1/10), Deborah Pelt (1/10).

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO: Rick Dunn & Cathy Kahl-Dunn (1/6).

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:

Mary Puca, Mike & Babs Raley, Helen Rapp, Sue Reynolds, Pam Rhodes, Wyck Richards & Bernie Walsh, Tom & Sandy Richmond, Liz Rotherham, Roberta Rowland-Raybold, Don & Joyce Saftner.

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.

Confession of Sin

The Celebrant continues

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.

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!***



Please sit.

The Holy Communion

Offertory

Another Year of Grace

A. Fedak

(Hymn of the Month)

Please stand.

Doxology

Old Hundredth

From all that dwell below the skies

let the Creator's praise arise!

Let the Redeemer's Name be sung

through every land, by every tongue!

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;

praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:

praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving and Sanctus Eucharistic Prayer A

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 gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary, his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.

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

S130

Bow during the underlined text

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

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

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

Hosanna in the highest. 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

**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.

Spirit Song

LEVAS 118

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you,
with His Spirit and His love,
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you,
and His Spirit like a dove,
Will descend upon your life,
and make you whole.

*Jesus. Oh, Jesus, come and fill your lambs.
Jesus. Oh, Jesus, come and fill your lambs.*

Oh, come and sing this song with gladness,
as your hearts are filled with joy,
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to His name.
Oh, give Him all your tears and sadness,
give Him all your years of pain,
And you'll enter into life
in Jesus' name.

Refrain

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the dark sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes,
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to heaven to live with thee there.



After Communion, the Celebrant says: Let us pray.

The People join in saying this prayer

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, who sent his Son to take our nature upon him, bless you in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten your heart with the light of his holiness.

People Amen.

May God, who sent his angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior's birth, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the Gospel.

People Amen.

May God, who in Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give you his peace and favor. 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.

~Please be seated for a brief announcement.~

Benediction to be sung

**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.**



All hail the power of Jesus' Name!

Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!

Crown him, ye martyrs of our God,
who from his altar call:
praise him whose way of pain ye trod,
and crown him Lord of all!
praise him whose way of pain ye trod,
and crown him Lord of all!

Hail him, the Heir of David's line,
whom David Lord did call,
the God incarnate, Man divine,
and crown him Lord of all!
the God incarnate, Man divine,
and crown him Lord of all!

Ye heirs of Israel's chosen race,
ye ransomed of the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all!
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,
on this terrestrial ball,
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!

The Celebrant dismisses the people.

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.***

Postlude ***The Old Year Now Hath Passed Away*** J.S. Bach

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)



The Altar Flowers are
given by Ann McIntyre,
“Happy Heavenly Birthday
to my Love.”



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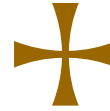
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Christmas Tree Skirt Created by Ann Geoghegan, 2025

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

Dir of Music: Roberta Rowland-Raybold, c.a.g.o.

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) ❖ Sue Crouch, Junior Warden (2026)
- ❖ Veronica Brown (2025) ❖ Marrjo Shattuck (2025) ❖ Robert Dunn (2026)
- ❖ Wayne Mumford (2026) Mike Raley (2027) ❖ Tracy Thompson (2027)
- ❖ Chris Welborn (2027)

Associate Vestry Members

- ❖ Harry Austin, Jr. (2025) ❖ Kathy Finch (2025) ❖ James Uzun (2025)

Vestry Officers

- ❖ Bill Mann, Treasurer ❖ Kathy Finch, Assistant Treasurer
- ❖ Jane Buckner, Parish/Vestry Clerk