



historic faith. present love. future hope.

We Welcome One and All

In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

December 21, 2025

10:00 am

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Founded 1660

www.strchurch.org

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Isaiah 7:10-16; Romans 1:1-7;
Psalm 80:1-7,17-19; Matthew 1:18-25

...“WE GATHER IN GOD’S PRESENCE...”

Advent IV: Love – “She will Bear a Son, Jesus”

Greeting | Ministry Opportunities

Introit

“Ave Maria”

Schubert

Nancy Ruffer, flute

Call to Worship

Leader: In the quiet of Advent, God’s love speaks.

People: **We come to listen for the voice of love.**

Leader: God called Joseph to trust beyond fear and understanding.

People: **In obedience, he made room for God’s saving work.**

Leader: Christ comes to save and to dwell with us.

All: **We worship the God whose love is with us now.**

Prayer

Lighting the Advent Wreath -

Susannah and Kenny Covert

Today we light the candle of **LOVE**. Jesus demonstrated self-giving love in his ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us his most precious gift. From the Gospel of John we hear:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

***Hymn 'O How Shall I Receive You' ST. THEODULPH**

O how shall I receive you
How meet you on your way
Blessed hope of every people
My soul's delight and stay
O Jesus, Jesus, give me
Now by your own pure light
To know whate'er is pleasing
And welcome in your sight

Love caused your incarnation
Love brought you down to me
Your thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty
O love beyond all telling
That led you to embrace
In love, all love excelling
Our lost and fallen race

You come, O Christ, with gladness
In mercy and goodwill
To bring an end to sadness
And bid our fears be still
In patient expectation
We live for that great day
When a renewed creation
Your glory shall display

Call to Confession

Responsive Prayer of Confession

Leader: Loving God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to save your people from their sins, offering us a new way to live.

People: But we confess that we often choose the familiar path of fear over your faithful love.

Leader: You call us to protect and honor the vulnerable, just as Joseph was called to protect Mary and the Christ child.

People: We confess that we often prioritize our reputation, our comfort, or our personal plans above the needs of others.

Leader: You speak hope into our darkest and most confusing moments, asking us to trust your ultimate purpose.

People: We confess that we often dismiss your quiet voice, clinging to our own doubts and demanding clear, easy answers instead of accepting the mystery of your grace.

Leader: Forgive us, O God, for the love we have withheld, the courage we have lacked, and the peace we have refused to embrace.

People: By the power of your Spirit, turn our hearts toward Jesus, that we may be agents of your love in the world. Amen.

Response 'Love Came Down at Christmas' Rosetti/Schaffer

Love came down at Christ - mas, love all love - ly, love di - vine.
Love shall be our to - ken; love be yours and love be mine;

5
Love came down at Christ - mas; star and an - gels gave the sign.
Love to God and neigh - bor, love for plea and gift and sign.

Words of Assurance and Hope

Musical Offering

"Celtic Rebirth"

Nan

Children's Dismissal

During the next song, we will release children, second through ninth grade. C&W are in class the entire hour.

***Song 'Wonderful Counselor/Wonderful Child' Traditional**

Leader: All:

The musical score is written on ten staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. The score is divided into two parts: 'Leader' and 'All:'. The lyrics are: 'Who do you call - the won-der-ful coun - se - lor? Oh, - glo-ry, hal-le-lu-jah! Oh, - glo-ry hal-le-lu-jah! Glo-ry, hal-le-lu-jah to the com-ing - King! - Je - sus, Je - sus, Oh - what a won-der-ful child Je - sus, Je - sus, so ho - ly, - meek and mild, - New life, new hope to all - He brings. Liis - ten - to the an - gels sing: - Glo - ry, glo - ry, Glo - ry Let the hea - vens ring!' The score includes a repeat sign with first and second endings for the 'King!' and 'Je - sus' lines.

Who do you call - the won-der-ful coun - se - lor? Oh, -
glo-ry, hal-le-lu-jah! Oh, - glo-ry hal-le-lu-jah! Glo-ry, hal-le-lu-jah to the
com-ing - King! - Je - sus, Je - sus,
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all - He brings. Liis - ten - to the an - gels sing: -
Glo - ry, glo - ry, Glo - ry Let the hea - vens ring!

...TO HEAR GOD'S WORD...

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Message "She will Bear a Son, Jesus" -Pastor Nate

...AND RESPOND WITH GRATITUDE...

Offering

(We give our gifts, tithes and offerings as an expression of gratitude for all of God's blessings. Giving "mites" are available at the church entrance for anyone who gives online and desires to join in the act of giving here today. Online giving is available at www.strchurch.org/give)



Offertory

"What Child Is This"

arr. Paul

*Doxology

Pastoral Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

*Hymn 'Now Bless the God of Israel'

FOREST GREEN

Now bless the God of Israel
Who comes in love and pow'r
Who raises from the royal house
Deliv'rance in this hour
Through holy prophets God has sworn
To free us from alarm
To save us from the heavy hand
Of all who wish us harm

Remembering the covenant
God rescues us from fear
That we might serve in holiness
And peace from year to year
And you, my child, shall go before
To preach, to prophesy
That all may know the tender love
The grace of God most high

In tender mercy God will send
The Dayspring from on high
Our rising sun, the light of life
For those who sit and sigh
God comes to guide our way to peace
That death shall reign no more
Sing praises to the Holy One
O worship and adore

***Benediction**

Announcements:

24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols @ 7pm!

28 – Worship Service

Special Guest Flautist:

This Sunday we are excited to welcome internationally acclaimed flautist **Nancy Ruffer**. Following a Fulbright-Hayes scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London, Ms. Ruffer has been principal flute in many ensembles, recorded many CDs and worked with various chamber groups and orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and London Sinfonietta.

TODAY IS BIRTHDAY SUNDAY! Please join us after the service for fellowship. Happy Birthday and may the good Lord bless: Nick Bailey, Ella Bar, John Benham, Leslie Benware, Kristin Brabec, Forrest Broom, Keanu Bryan, Lisa Campbell, Jasmine Comissiong, Arion Csanyi, Debbie Davis, Laura Duncan, Nikki Fagan, Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Kasani George, Linda Gidley, Lily Goguen, Kelly Neevel, Carolyn (CJ) Oleari, Robert Peterson, Chanelle Schaffer, Anthony Smith, Lori Thompson, Lisa Uncles, Richard Velazquez, Diego Villegas, Alex Whitter, Lisa and Ellis Wisehart.

Disciple Dollar Day + Christmas Cookie Exchange (This Sunday!) 🍪💰

This Sunday after worship, it's Disciple Dollar Day—and the kids will get to shop with their hard-earned Disciple Dollars! Parents and families, we'd love for you to stay after service and come watch them "cash in" what they've been earning through faithful participation. It's such a sweet moment to celebrate their growth and responsibility.

Also, don't forget our Christmas Cookie Exchange! Please send a small plate of cookies with your child (homemade or store-bought—either is perfect) so they can join in the fun and share with friends. Let's make it a joyful, festive Sunday together!

Thank you to everyone who purchased gifts for The Salvation Army Angel Tree! Gifts are due back TODAY for distribution tomorrow!

Children's Choir rehearses this morning in the Music Room after worship. All children ages 4-12 are encouraged to participate as we prepare music for the Christmas Eve Service!

XYG Christmas Game Night

XYG is gathering Monday, December 23rd for a festive Christmas Game Night! Expect laughter, friendly competition, and plenty of holiday fun as we celebrate the season together. This is a relaxed, joy-filled night—friends are absolutely welcome, so bring someone with you! Come ready to play, connect, and end the year in together. Parents or adults who would like to support the evening are invited to donate or sponsor the meal for our youth—your generosity helps make nights like this possible.

Yearly Giving 2025	Budget \$440,220	Actual \$276,199	November 2025	Budget \$51,310	Actual \$16,272
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Leading Worship Today:

Ministers:	All of us worshiping together
Preaching:	Pastor Nate DeWard
Liturgist:	Noelle DeWard & Reese Jeltema
Music:	Chanelle Schaffer, Nancy Ruffer & the Adult Choir~ Chanel Boschulte, Majestik Estrada-Peterson, Diana Ray, Phoebe Smith-Charles, Bill & Lori Thompson, Yolanda Thorpe, Ty & Bonnie Troutman, John Turpin, Mary Walden
AV/Livestream:	James Anderson, James Cobb, Lyra & Ariel Rosenthal & Dave Whitter
Greeters:	The Watson/Comissiong families

Nate Deward -	Transitional Pastor nate@strchurch.org
Chanelle Schaffer -	Minister of Music and Arts music@stthomasreformedchurch.org
Sheree` Haubrich -	Discipleship Coordinator shaubrich2021@outlook.com
Vicky Gomez-Christian -	Operations Administrator retreat@stthomasreformedchurch.org
Vicki Whitter -	Administrative Assistant officeadmin@stthomasreformedchurch.org