St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

The Church on Main Street...
where love begets love

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

A Service of Tenebrae with Christ Church in Short Hills

April 1, 2026



Tenebrae is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows". While traditionally it includes the ancient monastic night and early morning services of the last three days in Holy Week, it can be any worship in which there is the gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights as part of our Holy Week observance.

Our tradition includes a rich collection of writings given to us through the centuries by the Saints, people canonized by the Church for their holy service in relationship with God. These voices inspire us to ever more intimate connection with our Creator. Tonight we will hear a small sampling of these texts, female and male, spanning the years 70 to 1970 in the Common Era.

A candle will be extinguished after each reading to symbolize that each of us, no matter how saintly, comes to the end of our earthly existence. The last candle is a symbol of our Lord. Towards the end of the service it is hidden. Death only appears to have dominion over Christ. At the completion of the readings, a loud noise will be made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of the resurrection (Matthew 28:2), the hidden candle will be restored to its place, and by its light all will depart in silence. Christ remains with us, a living presence, and it is through his light that all our wisdom is possible.

The service ends when the candle symbolizing Christ is returned to the altar. We will end the service in silence.

SET ONE

Chant: "Within our darkest night"



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A PRAYER OF OSCAR ROMERO

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. **Amen.**

A candle is extinguished and we observe some moments of silence.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, FROM HIS SPEECH "I HAVE A DREAM"

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.
And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

DOROTHY DAY, FROM HER JOURNALS

"Unless the seed falls to the ground and die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." I don't expect any success in anything we are trying to do, either in getting out a paper, running houses of hospitality or farming groups, or retreat houses on the land. I expect that everything we do [will] be attended with human conflicts, and the suffering that goes with it, and that this suffering will water the seed to make it grow in the future. I expect that all our natural love for each other which is so warm and encouraging and so much a reward for this kind of work and living, will be killed, put to death painfully by gossip, intrigue, suspicion, distrust, etc., and that this painful dying to self and the longing for the love of others will be rewarded by a tremendous increase of supernatural love among us all. I expect the most dangerous of sins cropping up among us, whether of sensuality or pride it does not matter, but that the struggle will go on to such an extent that God will not let it hinder the work but that the work will go on, because that work is our suffering and our sanctification. So rejoice in failures, rejoice in suffering!

What are we trying to do? We are trying to get to heaven, all of us. We are trying to lead a good life. We are trying to talk about and write about the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the social principles of the church, and it is most astounding, the things that happen when you start trying to live this way. (Jan. 1948)

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

MORNING SONG BY JOY HARJO

The red dawn now is rearranging the earth

Thought by thought
Beauty by beauty

Each sunrise a link in the ladder

Thought by thought
Beauty by beauty

The ladder the backbone
Of shimmering deity

Thought by thought
Beauty by beauty

Child stirring in the web of your mother
Do not be afraid

Old man turning to walk through the door
Do not be afraid

SET TWO

Nothing can trouble *Taizé*



Words: St. Teresa de Jesus; Taize Community; Music: Jacques Berthier
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ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

Eternal Trinity,
Godhead,
mystery deep as the sea,
you could give me no greater gift
than the gift of yourself.
For you are a fire ever burning and never consumed,
which itself consumes all the selfish love
that fills my being.
Yes, you are a fire that takes away the coldness,
illuminates the mind with its light,
and causes me to know your truth.
And I know that
you are beauty and wisdom itself.
The food of angels,
you gave yourself to humankind
in the fire of your love.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

MARTIN LUTHER

The substance of the matter is this: When all the commandments have been put together, when their message receives every particle of praise to which it is entitled, it is still a mere letter. That is, teaching not put into practice. By "letter" is signified all manner of law, doctrine and message, which goes no farther than the oral or written word, which consists only of the powerless letter. To illustrate: A law promulgated by a prince or the authorities of a city, if not enforced, remains merely an open letter, which makes a demand indeed, but ineffectually. Similarly, God's Law, although a teaching of supreme authority and the eternal will of God, veritable table of omissions; that is, it is a written enumeration, not of duties performed but of duties cast aside. In the languages of the world, it is a royal edict which remains unobserved and unperformed. In this light St. Augustine understood the Law. He says, commenting on Psalm 17, "What is Law without grace but a letter without spirit?" Human nature, without the aid of Christ and his grace, cannot keep it.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence

DAME JULIAN OF NORWICH

And this same time that I saw this bodily sight, our Lord showed me a ghostly sight of His homely loving. I saw that He is to us all-thing that is good and comfortable to our help. He is our clothing: for love wraps us and winds us, embraces us and all betakes us, and hangs about us for tender love, that He may never leave us. And so in this sight I saw truly that He is all-thing that is good, as to mine understanding.

And in this He showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel-nut, lying in the palm of my hand; and, to my understanding, it was as round as any ball. I looked thereupon, and thought, "What may this be?" And I was answered generally thus: "It is all that is made."

I marveled how it might last, for me thought it might fall suddenly to nought for littleness. And I was answered in mine understanding: "It lasts, and ever shall, for God loves it." And so hath all-thing its being through the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three parts:

The first is that God made it.
The second is that He loves it.
The third is that God keeps it.

But what is that to me? Truly that He is the Maker, the Lover, the Keeper; for till I am substantially oned to Him I may never have love, rest nor true bliss.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

PRAYER OF ST. THERESA OF AVILA

Christ has no body but ours,
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,
Ours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Ours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Ours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Ours are the hands, ours are the feet,
Ours are the eyes, we are his body.
Christ has no body now but ours,
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,
Ours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but ours.

SET THREE

Chant: "Bless the Lord my soul"



MEISTER ECKHART

The whole Being of God is contained in God alone. The whole of humanity is not contained in one human, for one person is not all people. But in God the soul knows all humanity, and all things at their highest level of existence, since it knows them in their essence. Suppose someone to be in a beautifully adorned house: they would know much more about it than a person who had never entered therein, and yet wished to speak much about it. Thus, I am as sure as I am of my own existence and God's, that, if the soul is to know God, it must know God outside of time and place. Such a soul will know clearly how near God's kingdom is.

Students have often asked how it is possible for the soul to know God. It is not from severity that God demands much from human beings in order to obtain the knowledge of God's self: it is of God's kindness that God wills the soul by effort to grow capacious of receiving much, and that God may give much. L et no one think that to attain this knowledge is too difficult, although it may sound so, and indeed the commencement of it, and the renouncement of all things, is difficult. But when one attains to it, no life is easier nor more pleasant nor more lovable, since God is always endeavoring to dwell with humanity, and teach us in order to bring us to God's self. No one desires anything so eagerly as God desires to bring us to the knowledge of God's self. God is always ready, but we are very unready. God is near us, but we are far from God. God is within, and we are without. God is friendly; we are estranged. The prophet saith, "God leadeth the righteous by a narrow path into a broad and wide place, that is into the true freedom of those who have become one spirit with God." May God help us all to follow God that God may bring us to God's self. **Amen.**

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS CARITAS

I am Wisdom. Mine is the blast of the resounding Word through which all creation came to be, and I quickened all things with my breath so that not one of them is mortal in its kind; for I am Life. Indeed I am Life, whole and undivided -- not hewn from any stone, or budded from branches, or rooted in virile strength; but all that lives has its root in Me. For Wisdom is the root whose blossom is the resounding Word....

I flame above the beauty of the fields to signify the earth -- the matter from which humanity was made. I shine in the waters to indicate the soul, for, as water suffuses the whole earth, the soul pervades the whole body. I burn in the sun and the moon to denote Wisdom, and the stars are the innumerable words of Wisdom.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: O ETERNE DEUS

O Eternal God, now may it please you
to burn in love
so that we become the limbs
fashioned in the love you felt
when you begot your Son
at the first dawn
before all creation.

And consider this need which falls upon us,
take it from us for the sake of your Son,
and lead us to the joy of your salvation.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel." Note that a man whom the Lord sends forth as a preacher is called a watchman. A watchman always stands on a height so that he can see from afar what is coming. Anyone appointed to be a watchman for the people must stand on a height for all his life to help them by his foresight.

How hard it is for me to say this, for by these very words I denounce myself. I cannot preach with any competence, and yet insofar as I do succeed, still I myself do not live my life according to my own preaching.

. . . With my mind divided and torn to pieces by so many problems, how can I meditate or preach wholeheartedly . . .? Moreover, in my position I must often communicate with worldly men. At times I let my tongue run . . . I often listen patiently to chatter. And because I too am weak, I find myself drawn little by little into idle conversation, and I begin to talk freely about matters which once I would have avoided. So who am I to be a watchman, for I do not stand on the mountain of action but lie down in the valley of weakness? Truly the all-powerful Creator and Redeemer of mankind can give me in spite of my weaknesses a higher life and effective speech; because I love him, I do not spare myself in speaking of him.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

PRAYER BY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,
Praise, glory and honor and benediction all, are Thine.
To Thee alone do they belong, most High,
And there is no human fit to mention Thee.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,
Especially to my worshipful brother sun,
The which lights up the day, and through him dost Thou brightness give;
And beautiful is he and radiant with splendor great;
Of Thee, most High, signification gives.
Praised be my Lord, for sister moon and for the stars,
In heaven Thou hast formed them clear and precious and fair.
Praised be my Lord for brother wind
And for the air and clouds and fair and every kind of weather,
By the which Thou givest to Thy creatures nourishment.
Praised be my Lord for sister water,
The which is greatly helpful and humble and precious and pure.
Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
By the which Thou lightest up the dark.
And fair is he and gay and mighty and strong.
Praised be my Lord for our sister, mother earth,
The which sustains and keeps us
And brings forth diverse fruits with grass and flowers bright.
Praised be my Lord for those who for Thy love forgive
And weakness bear and tribulation.
Blessed those who shall in peace endure,
For by Thee, most High, shall they be crowned.
Praised be my Lord for our sister, the bodily death,
From the which no living man can flee.
Woe to them who die in mortal sin;
Blessed those who shall find themselves in Thy most holy will,
For the second death shall do them no ill.
Praise ye and bless ye my Lord, and give Him thanks,
And be subject unto Him with great humility.

SET FOUR

Chant: "O Lord, hear my prayer"



ST. AUGUSTINE, FROM HIS "CONFESSIONS"

Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and infinite is thy wisdom." And man desires to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation; he bears his mortality about with him and carries the evidence of his sin and the proof that thou dost resist the proud. Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee. Grant me, O Lord, to know and understand whether first to invoke thee or to praise thee; whether first to know thee or call upon thee. But who can invoke thee, knowing thee not? For he who knows thee not may invoke thee as another than thou art. It may be that we should invoke thee in order that we may come to know thee. But "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe without a preacher?" Now, "they shall praise the Lord who seek him," for "those who seek shall find him," and, finding him, shall praise him. I will seek thee, O Lord, and call upon thee. I call upon thee, O Lord, in my faith which thou hast given me, which thou hast inspired in me through the humanity of thy Son, and through the ministry of thy preacher.

A candle is extinguished and we observe a few moments of silence.

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH TO BISHOP POLYCARP

While I was impressed with your godly mind, which is fixed, as it were, on an immovable rock, I am more than grateful that I was granted the sight of your holy face. God grant I may never forget it! By the grace which you have put on, I urge you to press forward in your race and to urge everybody to be saved. Vindicate your position by giving your whole attention to its material and spiritual sides. Make unity your concern — there is nothing better than that. Lend everybody a hand, as the Lord does you. "Out of love be patient" with everyone, as indeed you are. Devote yourself to continual prayer. Ask for increasing insight.

The remaining candle is removed and we observe a few moments of silence.

Please kneel if you are able.

CHRISTUS FACTUS EST

Christ for us became obedient unto death, even to death upon a cross; therefore God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the Name which is above every name.

PSALM 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness,*
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.

And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.

Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.

Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices,
with burnt-offerings and oblations; *
then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.

THE COLLECT

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross. **Amen.**

A loud noise is made and the candle is returned to the altar. This service ends in silence.

LITURGICAL STEWARDSHIP

Officiant (SSM):	The Rev. Paula J. Toland
Officiants (CCSH):	The Rev. Bowie Snodgrass, The Rev. George Dredden
Deacon:	The Rev. Deacon Karen Eberhardt
Minister of Music:	Kim Williams
Lectors (SSM):	Barbara R., Kira
Lector (CCSH):	Rob, Peggy
Altar Guild:	Julia
Tech Verger:	Ron
Greeter/Usher:	Barbara R.

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PARISH PRAYER LIST

Mary Loucas
Evie Larson
Donna Riggi
Mary Ruth Stone
Kris Hunt
Aldaiza DaSilva
Antonio DaSilva
Carol & Kyle McManus
Martha Lipowski
Keith Taber
Maryann Ekberg
Lizzie Ekberg
Boyd Hunnaman
James K.
Walter
Ron G.
Marvin
Kayt and Adam Zielinski
Victor Calantoni
Jenna Mitchell
Brian Nusom
Melissa Biren
Karen Eberhardt
Sue and Larry H.
Maureen Burke Rockaway
Maggie Holland
Celine Ghiara
Irina Brown
Kathleen N.
Timothy M.

Upcoming Events

Details can be found in the weekly e-newsletter, which is available on our website.

DATE	TIME	DESCRIPTION
4/2 Maundy Thurs	6:30 PM	Maundy Thursday Service & Agape Supper
4/3 Good Friday	12:00 PM	Good Friday Prayer Service
	7:30 PM	Good Friday Solemn Collects w/ Veneration of the Cross
4/4 Holy Saturday	10:00 AM	Holy Saturday Service
4/5 Easter Sunday	10:00 AM	Sunday Worship
	11:00 AM	Easter Egg Hunt
	1:00 PM	AA Meeting

ST. STEPHEN'S FRIENDS OF MUSIC ORGAN RECITAL – On Sunday, April 26th at 4:00pm, internationally renowned concert organist Damin Spritzer will present a special organ recital at St. Stephen's Church in Millburn. Though often promoting the works of lesser-known composers, Dr. Spritzer will focus on the music of the great Baroque master, Johann Sebastian Bach, for this performance.

General admission will be available at the door.
A $20 cash donation is suggested.
Artist's reception to follow the recital.

St. Stephen's Organ recitals are made possible through financial support from St. Stephen's Friends of Music. Tax deductible donations can be made to St. Stephen's, entitling sponsors admission to the recital and acknowledgement in our organ recital programs. Donations to the Special Gifts - Friends of Music fund *may be made online via Tithely.*

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

"A diverse Episcopal parish, a life-giving sanctuary, a place where love begets love. Seekers, doubters, and believers find a comfortable place in our midst."

119 Main Street, Millburn, NJ 07041 / 973-376-0688 / ststephensmillburn.org
Rector: The Rev. Paula J. Toland; Emergency Contact: 508-542-1327
Parish Administrator: Maria T. Card

Minister of Music: Kim Williams; Organist: John Schucker

Members of the Vestry
Maryalice Chech: Warden, People & Programs; Roger Riedel, Warden, Property & Preschool; Ashley Morgan: Treasurer; Fran Taber; Julia Dorn; Kira Hanson; Linda Soughan; Steve Moran; Tom Hillemeier; Barbara Riedel: Recording Secretary & Clerk

Sheelagh Clarke; Eugene Foley: Vestry Emeriti

If you wish to receive the weekly e-newsletter, please contact the parish office at 973-376-0688 or church@ststephensmillburn.org.