



ST. STEPHEN, DEACON & MARTYR

December 26, 2021

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
1600 S. Main St. Fond du Lac, Wisconsin 54937
www.stpetersfdl.net

Worship: Thursday, 6:30 pm ~ Sunday, 7:45 & 10:30 am
Phone: 922-1160 or 921-8075

Pastor Michael J. Zuberbier: 517-8808 Pastor Luke J. Boehringer: 579-8150
For hospital visits or emergencies, please call Pastor Zuberbier at 517-8808
St. Peter's Lutheran School, Mr. Benjamin J. Raddatz, Principal 922-1160 ext. 302
Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Mr. David Schroeder, Principal 921-4930 ext. 304

WELCOME TO GOD'S HOUSE May the Christ-child strengthen us in the green pastures of his Word.

Thank you for joining us for worship. If you have any questions about our service or practice, please feel free to ask one of the ushers or a pastor.

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- Visitors, we are pleased that you have joined us. Please feel free to inquire about our congregation through the pastors, one of the ushers, or one of the members. If you are a visitor from out of town, please be sure to introduce yourself to one of the pastors after the service. We welcome all of you to come and worship with us again.

A PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP O Lord, in prayer you spent the night, then sent the twelve at morning's light. Our hearts at your request are stirred to ask for heralds of your Word: Send preachers forth and each one bless with courage, zeal, and holiness. Keep pastors faithful, strong, and true, not working for themselves but you. Endow them with the grace they need, the lambs to serve, the sheep to feed, the precious flock to lead and guide – the Shepherd thus is glorified. Amen.

SERVICE THEME We thank the Lord for faithful witnesses like Stephen, who risked everything so that the precious Gift of Jesus could be handed down to us.

ORDER OF WORSHIP *Service of the Word* on page 38 in the front of the hymnal

OPENING HYMN *Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We* | **CW 46**

M: The grace of our Lord † Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

CONFESSION OF SINS

- M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.
- C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**
- M: God our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.
- C: **Amen.**

PRAYER AND PRAISE

- M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

SONG OF PRAISE

Let All Together Praise Our God | CW 41 v 1-3

**Let all together praise our God Before his highest throne;
Today he opens heav'n again
And gives us his own Son, And gives us his own Son.**

**He leaves his heav'nly Father's throne, Is born an infant small,
And in a manger, poor and lone,
Lies in a humble stall, Lies in a humble stall.**

**He veils in flesh his pow'r divine A servant's form to take;
In want and lowliness must die
Who heav'n and earth did make, Who heav'n and earth did make.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- M: Let us pray.
Eternal Son of God, accompany us with your grace, that whenever we suffer for your Word, we may follow the example of St. Stephen, your first martyr, and like him, commending our cause to you, be ready to pray for those who would harm us; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C: **♪Amen.**

FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 26:1-9, 12-15

Like the great Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, Stephen boldly testified to the truth, even in the face of death.

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.'" The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the LORD. But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! Why do you prophesy in the LORD's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?" And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

HYMN*Let All Together Praise Our God | CW 41 4-6*

**A wondrous change which he does make: He takes our flesh and blood,
 And he conceals for sinners' sake
 His majesty as God, His majesty as God.**

**He serves that I a lord may be—A great exchange indeed!
 Could Jesus' love do more for me
 To help me in my need, To help me in my need?**

**For us he opens wide the door Of paradise today.
 The angel guards the gate no more;
 To God our thanks we pay, To God our thanks we pay.**

SERMON TEXT

Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51-60

Stephen, called by the early Church as one of its seven deacons, was an early Christian martyr.

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?" Stephen said: ... "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he

said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

VERSE OF THE DAY♪ **Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**These words are written that we may believe
 that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Matthew 23:34-39

Jesus foretold that his faithful messengers would testify to the Truth of the Gospel by being persecuted and executed for their faith.

"I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

M: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: ♪ **Praise be to you, O Christ!****HYMN OF THE DAY***By All Your Saints Still Striving | CW 552:1, 25, 3*

**By all your saints still striving, For all your saints at rest,
 Your holy name, O Jesus, Forevermore be blest!
 You rose, our King victorious, That they might wear the crown
 And ever shine in splendor Reflected from your throne.**

All praise, O Lord, for Stephen, Who, martyred, saw you stand
To help in time of torment, To plead at God's right hand.
Like you, our suff'ring Savior, His enemies he blessed;
With "Lord, receive my spirit," His faith, in death, confessed.

Then let us praise the Father And worship God the Son
And sing to God the Spirit, Eternal Three in One,
Till all the ransomed number Who stand before the throne
Ascribe all pow'r and glory And praise to God alone.

"Stephen's Forgiving Heart"

Pastor Boehringer

1. Bold truth like his fellow prophets
2. Merciful echoing his Savior Jesus

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRESENTING OF OUR OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Please remain standing.

HYMN

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God | CW 272

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.
Restore unto me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with your free Spirit.
Amen.

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: ♪ Amen.

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

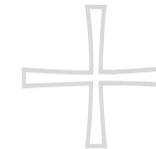
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace.

C: ♪ Amen. Amen. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord | CW 28



ORGANIST
Ruth Koepsell

GREETERS

7:45 ~ Travis & Brindah Birkholz
10:30 ~ Sue Repp