



ORDER FOR WORSHIP

St. Stephen

December 26, 2021

Blessed St. Stephen is remembered as the first of the church's martyrs. The readings remind us that God's people have a history littered with the corpses of prophets and godly ambassadors whose words they failed to hear. Stephen's dying words echo those of our Savior, whose birth we have begun to celebrate again. Today we pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the vision and voice of Jesus.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRELUDE

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge this land on which St. Philip's Lutheran Church is located. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to meet, worship, and serve on this land.

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG

"Once in Royal David's City"

ELW 269 vs. 1, 2

PRAYER OF THE DAY

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of Stephen the first martyr, who looked to heaven and prayed for his persecutors. Grant that we also may pray for our enemies and seek forgiveness for those who hurt us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

READING

Acts 6: 8 ---7: 2a, 51 – 60

The Christian community is growing rapidly. Even priests, along with Jews from all sorts of backgrounds, have joined the group of disciples. But as the community grows, so does the opposition, which now becomes violent. Listen as Stephen echoes Jesus' prayer of forgiveness for his opponents.

⁸Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹²They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. ¹³They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." ¹⁵And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.⁷ ¹Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" ^{2a}And Stephen replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me.

⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. ⁵³You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it." ⁵⁴When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL

Matthew 23: 34 - 39

Matthew 23 is a polemic aimed at the religious leaders of Jesus' day. This passage is one of the most radical, accusing the "scribes and Pharisees" (vs. 29) of murdering God's messengers. The picture of the Pharisees is one-sided and therefore misleading, but it shows Matthew's concern that all come to repentance.

[Jesus said:] ³⁴"Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, ³⁵so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation. ³⁷"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸See, your house is left to you, desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

ELW 270 vs. 1, 3

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Each petition ends: Hear us, O God,

Response: **Your mercy is great.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

SHARING OF PEACE

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

COMMUNION

COMMUNION SONG

“Twas in the Moon of Wintertime”

ELW 284

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Emmanuel, God with us,
you grace us with life and breath
and give us bread for the journey.

Send us out in service to this world that you love,
telling the amazing news of your coming
to be Savior and Lord of all.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

Grace from God's own heart,
peace from the † Child in the manger,
and strength from the Spirit of life
be blessings for you today and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

ELW 275 vs. 1, 4

DISMISSAL

Christ is born!

Go tell it on the mountain and everywhere.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

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SERVING TODAY

Marcia Powers-Dunlop	Worship Leader
Rev. Dan Phannenhour	Pastor
Brenda Paddon	Supply Music Leader
Donna Schwantes	Reader
Karen Adolph	Livestream Usher
Dave Pascoe	Audio Visual

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN OUR PRAYERS

Gus Berndt, Kevin Cartwright, Rodney Erlandson, Al Jacksteit, Matt Kirkpatrick, Mona Kibsey, Mark Kieswetter, Fran Moore, Pat Penney, Julie Potocny, and Helen Scollnik.



ST. PHILIP'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

THIS WEEK AT ST. PHILIP'S

Monday	Church Office Open: 9 - 12
Tuesday	Church Office Open 9 - 12
Wednesday	Church Office Open 9 - 12
Thursday	Church Office Closed
Friday	Church Office Closed

OUR VISION

Freed by the grace of Christ, we seek to connect with God, neighbour and self.

VISION STATEMENT:

We are a diverse and inclusive Lutheran faith community freed by the grace of Christ to find God and self as we connect with our neighbours. We **practise hospitality** of open hearts and open arms. We **unite with partners** to make a difference in our neighbourhood. We **nurture** the community of Christ.

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