Today’s Focus: St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

For centuries the Christian Church has commemorated the ministry of St. Stephen on December 26. Stephen was one of seven deacons called to assist the apostles in the early Church. He helped distribute charitable aid to the widows in Jerusalem. He also faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed Christ Jesus at the cost of his life. Stoned to death by the Jewish religious leaders, Stephen became the first martyr of the Christian Church. So today we commemorate and thank God for the ministry of St. Stephen, deacon and martyr.

Opening Hymn

“Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising” CW 42 (pg. 8)

Liturgical Service

Invocation

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 & Absolution

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

🎵 **Oh, Taste and See**

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed are they who take refuge in him.

Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Your faithfulness continues forever.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed are they who take refuge in him.

**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 Saint Stephen, your first martyr, and like him, commending our cause to you, be ready to pray for those who would do us harm; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: 🎵 Amen.

*Be Seated*

**First Lesson**

Jeremiah 26:1-9,12-15

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the Lord: 2 “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. 3 Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from their evil ways. Then I will relent and not inflict on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. 4 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, 5 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), 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city a curse among all the nations of the earth.’”

7 The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the Lord. 8 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! 9 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.

12 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. 13 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. 14 As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. 15 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.”

**Psalm 31**

*The congregation sings the psalm in unison.*

Pg. 9
Second Lesson

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

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. 9 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—who began to argue with Stephen. 10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

15 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 Stephen, “Are these charges true?”

To this he replied: 51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 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. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 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.

Hymn

“O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is” CW 40 (pg. 10)

Stand

Gospel

Matthew 23:34-39

34 I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 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 Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

37 “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, and you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 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 our Lord.
C: Praise be to you, O Christ!
Be Seated

Hymn of the Day

“Oh, Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly”  CW 45 (pg. 11)

Sermon—Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51-60

“Learn From Stephen How to Die”

Rev. Victor Prange

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 vir- gin 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.

Offertory

Offerings given in thanks to the Lord are brought to the Lord’s altar. We ask that all worshipers fill out a “Welcome to Worship” card (found in the hymnal racks) and place it in the offering plates at the sanctuary doors following the service.

Stand

Prayer of the Church

O God, our Savior, you fulfilled your promises to our forefathers by humbling yourself to be born of the Virgin Mary for us and for our salvation. Grant that the whole church on earth may resound in praise for your incarnate presence in the flesh, and the forgiveness which you have won for us. Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

O God, our Savior, by an angel you protected your people Israel as they journeyed to the promised land, and by another angel you protected your Son from Herod’s merciless slaughtering of the infants in Bethlehem. Continue to send your holy angels to protect your people, especially the unborn, the aged, and the developmentally challenged. Cause us to see all life as proof of your wondrous creation, and lead us to care for and preserve all life. Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

O God, grant that the light of Christ’s forgiveness may illuminate the lives of those lost in sin. Bless the work of all who proclaim your saving Word. Through your Law, lead people to repentance, that they may welcome and believe your Gospel promises. Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.
O God, our Savior, ruler of the world, sustain those in authority over us, especially the president of our country and the governor of our state. Lead them to recognize that they are your servants to guide, protect, defend, and promote peace and good order in our land. Lead all governmental leaders to act honestly and justly for the welfare of all. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

O God, our Savior, at the right time you became flesh to redeem us. By your redemption on the cross, comfort all those who are in need and all those who mourn (especially __________). Give them patience in facing their afflictions, and strengthen their faith in you. Remove their doubts, and assure them of your abiding presence. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

O God, our Savior, together with St. Stephen and all your church triumphant, we praise you and confess you as Lord. Preserve us from impenitence and unbelief, forgive all our sins, and clothe us with Christ’s righteousness. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy,

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THE 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Be Seated

🎶 HYMN
“By All our Saints Still Striving” CW 552 (pg. 12)

Stand

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.
**Blessing**

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
   The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
   The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.


*Be Seated*

**Closing Hymn**

“Let Us All with Gladsome Voice” CW 64

**Christmas**

Let Us All with Gladsome Voice

1. Let us all with gladsome voice Praise the God of heaven, Who, to bid our hearts rejoice, His own Son has given.
2. To this vale of tears he comes, Here to serve in sadness, That with him in heav’n’s fair homes We may reign in gladness.
3. We are rich, for he was poor; Is not this a wonder? Therefore praise God ever more Here on earth and yonder.
4. O Lord Christ, our Savior dear, Bless us and be near us. Grant us now a glad new year. Amen, Jesus, hear us!

Tune: *LASST UNS ALLE* (76 76 Trochaic) *Ander Theil Des Dressdenischen GesangBuchs*, Dresden, 1632, alt.

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Guest Preacher  
Rev. Victor Prange

Presiding Minister  
Rev. Kirk Lahmann

Pianist  
Allison Sorensen
Please stand to sing verse 5.

CHRISTMAS

42

Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising

1 Come, your hearts and voices raising, Christ the
2 See how God, for us providing, Gave his
3 Christ, from heav’n to us descending And in
4 Jacob’s Star in all its splendor Beams with
5 Gracious Child, we pray you, hear us; From your

Lord with gladness praising; Loudly sing his love a-
Son and life abiding; He our weary steps is
love our race befriending, In our need his help ex-
com - fort sweet and tender, Forcing Satan to sur-
low - ly man - ger cheer us. Gent - ly lead us and be

maz - ing, Wor - thy folk of Chris - ten - dom.
guid - ing From earth’s woe to heav’n - ly joy.
tend - ing, Saved us from the wi - ly foe.
ren - der, Breaking all the pow’rs of hell.

near us Till we join th’ an - gel - ic choir.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607–76, abr.; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, St. Louis, 1941.
Tune: QUEM PASTORES (88 87) Ein Schlesich singebüchlein, Breslau, 1555.
Psalm 31

Please sing Psalm in unison.

Refrain

Sure-ly, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be a-fraid. For the Lord is my strong-hold and my sure de-fense, and he will be my Sav-ior.

Psalm tone

In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge;*
   deliver me in your righteousness.

Be my rock of refuge,*
   a strong fortress to save me.

Into your hands I commit my spirit;*
   redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.

Refrain

My times are in your hands;*
   save me in your un-fail-ing love.

How great is your goodness,*
   which you have stored up for those who fear you.

You heard my cry for mercy*
   when I called to you for help.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son*
   and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,*
   is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Refrain

O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is

1 O Jesus Christ, Your manager is
2 He whom the sea And wind obey
3 Dear Christian friend, On him depend;
4 Ponder again What glory then
5 The world may hold Her wealth and gold;

My paradise where my soul is real
Comes down to serve the sinner in great
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow
The Lord will give you for your earthly
But you, my heart, keep Christ as your true

clinical. For there, O Lord, We find the Word
meekness. Now God’s own Son With us is one
move you. For God’s own child In mercy mild
sadness. The angel host Can never boast
treasure. To him hold fast Un till at last

Made flesh for us—your grace is brightly shining.
And joins us and our children in our weakness.
Joins you to him—how greatly God must love you!
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.
A crown is yours and honor in full measure.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607–76, abr.; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, St. Louis, 1941, alt.
Tune: O JESU CHRIST, DEIN Kripplein ist (44 11 D) Johann Crüger, 1598–1662.
1 Oh, rejoice, all Christians, loudly, For our joys have now begun; Wondrous things our God has done.

2 See, my soul, your Savior choos-es Pover-ty and weak-ness, too; In such love he comes to you.

3 Lord, how shall I thank you right-ly? I am saved even-ter-nally By your life and death for me.

4 Je-sus, guard and guide your mem-ber-s; Make us child-ren of your grace; Hear our prayers in ev-ry place.

Tell abroad his good-ness proudly, Who our race has hon-ored so, That he lives with us be-low.

Neither crib nor cross re-fus-es, All he suf-fers for your good To re-deem you by his blood.

Let me not re-gard you light-ly But on you in faith de-pend, Prais-ing you, my heav’n-ly friend.

Fan to life faith’s glow-ing em-ber-s; Give all Chris-tians far and near Holly peace, a glad new year.

Refrain

Joy, oh, joy be-yond all glad-ness, Christ has done a-way with sad-ness!

Hence all sor-row and re-pin-ing, For the Sun of grace is shin-ing!

Tune: FREUET EUCH, IHR CHRISTEN ALLE (877 877 with Refrain) Andreas Hammerschmidt, c. 1611–75, alt.
SAINTS AND MARTYRS

552

By All Your Saints Still Striving

St. Stephen

1 By all your saints still striv ing, For
2 All praise, O Lord, for Ste phen, Who,
3 Then let us praise the Fa ther And

all your saints at rest, Your ho ly name, O
mar tyred, saw you stand To help in time of
wor ship God the Son And sing to God the

Je sus, For ev er more be blessed. You
tor ment, To plead at God’s right hand. Like
Spir it, E ter nal Three in One, Till

rose, our King vic to rious, That they
you, our suf f’ring Sav ior, His en -
all the ransomed num ber Who stand

might wear the crown And ev er shine in
e mies he blessed; With “Lord, re ceive my
be fore the throne As cre be all pow’r and

splen dor Re flect ed from your throne.
spir it, His faith, in death, con fessed.
glo ry And praise to God a lone.

St. 1-4, 6-27. From The Hymnal 1982. © 1985 The Church Pension Fund. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Church Publishing Inc., New York, NY.
St. 5 © 1993 Harlyn J. Kuschel. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
Tune: Kuortane (76 76 D) Finnish folk tune, c. 19th century.

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