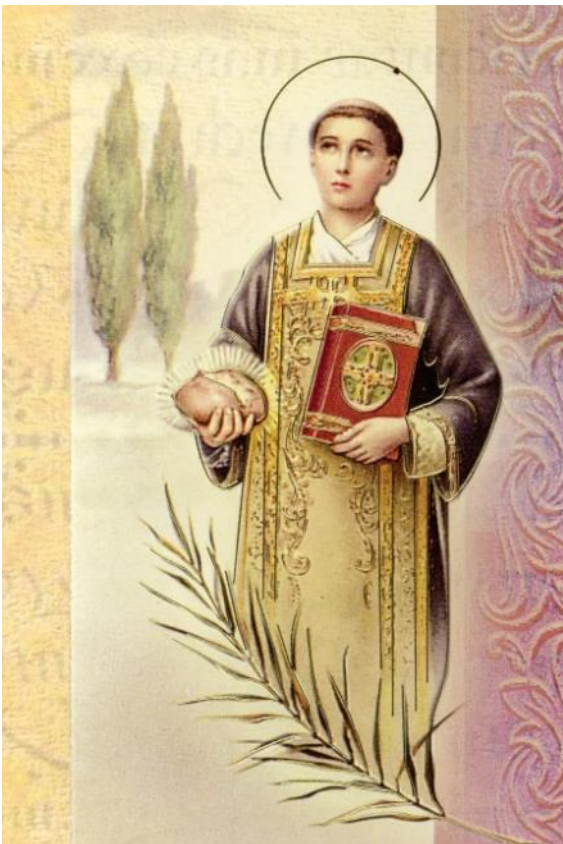


# The Season of Christmas



*Saint Stephen's welcomes everyone who wishes to follow Christ, worship together, grow in faith and share God's love through service to others.*

## FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN



### **Saint Stephen**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
**Stephen** (**Greek**: Στέφανος *Stéphanos*, meaning "wreath, crown" and by extension "reward, honor, renown, fame", often given as a title rather than as a name; **Hebrew**: סטפנוס הקדוש, *Stephanos HaQadosh*; c. 5 – c. 34 AD) traditionally venerated as the **protomartyr** or first martyr of **Christianity**,<sup>[1]</sup> was, according to the **Acts of the Apostles**, a **deacon** in the early Church at **Jerusalem** who angered members of various **synagogues** by his teachings. Accused of **blasphemy** at his trial, he made a speech denouncing the Jewish authorities who were sitting in judgment on him and was then **stoned to death**. **Saul of Tarsus**, later known as Paul, a **Pharisee** and Roman citizen who would later become a **Christian apostle**, participated in Stephen's **martyrdom**.<sup>[Acts 22:20]</sup>

The only source for information about Stephen is the **New Testament** book of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>[2]</sup> Stephen is mentioned in **Acts 6** as one of the Greek-speaking **Hellenistic Jews** selected to participate in a fairer distribution of welfare to the Greek-speaking widows.<sup>[3]</sup>

The **Catholic, Anglican, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox Churches, Lutheran** and the

**Welcome and Announcements:**

Wed. 29 December 9:30am, 2021



## **Opening Acclamation:**

**Presider** Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
**People** **And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever. Amen**

**Presider** *Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Gloria/Glory to God**

Hymnal 1982 # S280

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

## **The Collect of the Day:**

**Presider** The Lord be with you  
**People** **And also with you.**  
**Presider** Let us pray

**All:** **We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.**

## **The Word of God**     *(Please be seated)*

### **The Old Testament:** A reading from **Jeremiah 26:1-9, 12-15**

At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came from the Lord: Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings. You shall say to them: Thus says the Lord: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently-- though you have not heeded-- then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "You shall die! Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, "It is the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears."

*Lector:* The Word of the Lord

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm 31:1-5

*In tr, Domine, speravi* (Read aloud in unison)

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame; \*  
deliver me in your righteousness.**
- 2 Incline your ear to me; \*  
make haste to deliver me.**
- 3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,  
for you are my crag and my stronghold; \*  
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.**
- 4 Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, \*  
for you are my tower of strength.**
- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, \*  
for you have redeemed me,  
O Lord, O God of truth.**

## **The New Testament Lesson: A reading from Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51c-60**

Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then 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. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." They 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. They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; for 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." And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?"

And Stephen replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. You are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which 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. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it."

When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and

with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then 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. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then 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.

*Lector:* The Word of the Lord    *People:* **Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Lesson:**

*Reader:* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to  
**Matthew 23:34-39**

**People:      Glory to you, Lord Christ**

Jesus said, "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, so 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. Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.

"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! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

*Reader*      The Gospel of the Lord

**People**      **Praise to you, Lord Christ**

## **Homily**

**Nicene Creed:** *Traditional Version (Said aloud by all, in unison)*

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,**

**of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## **Prayers of the People**

Leader: *Let us pray to God, who came among us in the birth of Jesus:*

*Gracious God, as a star rose, and drew people from great distances to Bethlehem that they might greet the Christ-child; Draw us, your Church, and all of your people to you – that we might be the Church and the People who you call us to be. Lord, in your mercy,*

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As you gave Mary your Holy Spirit, filling her with the delight of your Presence; Fill us with your Spirit, and renew our lives. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As Gentiles streamed to Jesus' Light, and Kings to the brightness of his rising; Draw our nation, our President, and all in authority, to His brightness. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As angels sang 'glorias' to you and proclaimed peace on earth, and goodwill among all peoples; Bring us your peace, and bring an end to and terror and strife. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As shepherds were drawn away from their flocks by night; Draw those who do not know you yet to the knowledge and love of you. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As Jesus was born in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn; Be especially present with those who have no where to lay their head, those who are vulnerable, and those who are hungry. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As the Holy Family gathered together in Bethlehem, and traveled together to far off lands; Bless all families, especially the families of our parish, and protect those who travel. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *As your son came to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of Life Eternal; Give to the departed eternal rest and let Light perpetual shine on them. Lord, in your mercy,*

**Hear our prayer.**

Leader: *Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, (people add their own prayers either silently or aloud). Lord, in your mercy*

**Hear our prayer.**

**Presider:** *O Lord our God, may the Light and Hope of this night and this Christmas season, and of your Son's Incarnation, reassure our hearts that you are among us, that you hear our prayers, and that you will be with us always, even to the end of the age. In the name of Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.*

**Exchange of the Peace**

Presider *May the peace of Christ be always with you*

All **And also with you.**

*The Ministers and People exchange socially distant signs of peace (peace sign, namaste, virtual hug)*

**Offertory**

Presider: *Through Christ let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name.*

# Holy Communion

The Great Thanksgiving

Rite II Prayer B BCP p. 372

Presider *The Lord be with you.*

People **And also with you.**

Presider *Lift up your hearts.*

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Presider *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

People **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

*Presider: It is truly right to glorify you, Father, and to give you thanks; for you alone are God, living and true, dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and forever.*

**People:**

**Fountain of life and source of all goodness, you made all things and fill them with your blessing; you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.**

*Countless throngs of angels stand before you to serve you night and day; and, beholding the glory of your presence, they offer you unceasing praise. Joining with them, and giving voice to every creature under heaven, we acclaim you, and glorify your Name, as we sing (say),*

*Celebrant and People*

*Hymnal 1982 #S130*

All:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might (x2),  
heaven and earth are full, full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest. (x2)**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest (x2).**

*Presider continues: We acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power. Your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love.*

**You formed us in your own image, giving the whole world into our care, so that, in obedience to you, our Creator, we might rule and serve all your creatures.**

*When our disobedience took us far from you, you did not abandon us to the power of death. In your mercy you came to our help, so that in seeking you we might find you.*



**Again and again you called us into covenant with you, and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.**

*Father, you loved the world so much that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior. Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, he lived as one of us, yet without sin.*

**To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation; to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy. To fulfill your purpose he gave himself up to death; and, rising from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new.**

*And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.*

**When the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.**

*At supper with them he took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."*

*After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."*

*Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption.*

*Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead, proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand, awaiting his coming in glory; and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us, this bread and this cup, we praise you and we bless you.*

**We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks to you, and we pray to you, O Lord our God.**

*Lord, we pray, that in your goodness and mercy, your Holy Spirit may descend upon us (+) and upon these gifts (+), sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.*

**Grant that all who share this bread and cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ, to the praise of your Name.**

*Remember, Lord, your one holy catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of your Christ.*

**Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace.**

*And grant that we may find our inheritance with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with Matriarchs, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, and all the saints who have found favor with you in ages past.*

**We praise you in union with them and give you glory through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

*Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, all honor and glory are yours, Almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. AMEN.*

And now as Jesus taught us, we pray:

**Lord's Prayer:**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

**Fraction:** *(In silence the Presider breaks the bread)*

*All Sing*

*Hymnal 1982 #S154:*

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia  
Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,  
Therefore let us keep the feast,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*

**Invitation to Communion:**

Presider: *The gifts of God for the people of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith and with thanksgiving.*

*(Everyone is invited to come forward and receive communion or a blessing).*

**Recognition of a Birthday, Anniversary, Healing, Gratitude**

**Post Communion Prayer** *The people stand as they are able.*

Presider: Let us pray:

*Presider and People*

**Almighty and ever-living God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and**

**to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Presider: *Holy God, make us holy as you are holy. Revealing God, allow us to see as you see. Sending God, motivate us to move as you move. Loving God, inspire us to love as you love. And the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.*

## **Dismissal**

Presider: People of St. Stephen's, what does God call us to do?

**People: We are called to love and serve.**

Presider: Let us go forth, rejoicing in God's Spirit, alleluia, alleluia!

**People: Thanks be to God,! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Continued from Pg.1

Church of the East view Stephen as a saint.<sup>[4]</sup> Artistic representations often show Stephen with a crown symbolising martyrdom, three stones, martyr's palm frond, censer, and often holding a miniature church building. Stephen is often shown as a young, beardless man with a tonsure, wearing a deacon's vestments.

## **Background**

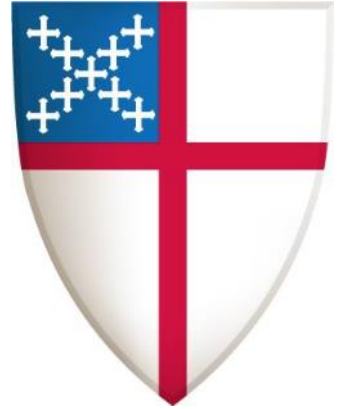
Stephen is first mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as one of seven deacons appointed by the Apostles to distribute food and charitable aid to poorer members of the community in the early church. According to Orthodox belief, he was the eldest and is therefore called "archdeacon".<sup>[5]</sup> As another deacon, Nicholas of Antioch, is specifically stated to have been a convert to Judaism, it may be assumed that Stephen was born Jewish, but nothing more is known about his previous life.<sup>[2]</sup> The reason for the appointment of the deacons is stated to have been dissatisfaction among Hellenistic (that is, Greek-influenced and Greek-speaking) Jews that their widows were being slighted in preference to Hebraic ones in the daily distribution of food. Since the name "Stephanos" is Greek, it has been assumed that he was one of these Hellenistic Jews. Stephen is stated to have been full of faith and the Holy Spirit and to have performed miracles among the people.<sup>[Acts 6:5, 8]</sup>

It seems to have been among synagogues of Hellenistic Jews that he performed his teachings and "signs and wonders" since it is said that he aroused the opposition of the "Synagogue of the Freedmen", and "of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them that were of Cilicia and Asia".<sup>[Acts 6:9]</sup> Members of these synagogues had challenged Stephen's teachings, but Stephen had bested them in debate. Furious at this humiliation, they suborned false testimony that Stephen had preached blasphemy against Moses and God. They dragged him to appear before the Sanhedrin, the supreme legal court of Jewish elders, accusing him of preaching against the Temple and the Mosaic Law.<sup>[Acts 6:9-14]</sup> Stephen is said to have been unperturbed, his face looking like "that of an angel".<sup>[2]</sup>

*Notice: All church activities may be internet streamed, video recorded, and photographed for church uses. Entry on to the church campus or in to any church building constitutes consent to be streamed, videotaped, or photographed for church purposes.*



## ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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### Welcome Visitor!!!

Please leave your name and contact info below. If you'd like to speak with someone, please check here

Or you can also use the QRC here to fill this out online.



Info Update    Giving Envelopes     Mail News Letter   

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (first) \_\_\_\_\_ (Mid.) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last)

Hm: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Anv. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Adrs: \_\_\_\_\_ BrthDate \_\_\_\_\_

City, St., Zip: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_