



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Worship Service with Holy Communion
Wednesday, March 17, 2021 ■ 11:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

Midweek Lent—Stations of the Cross / Station Five

Worship Service



Welcome to the Lenten journey to the cross ...

For this season of Lent at St Stephen's we are using the eight biblical Stations of the Cross as a framework for our worship, including Scripture readings, meditations, music and prayers. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding on Good Friday, we will follow Jesus along the *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of Sorrow, as he journeys from Pilate's Hall to his death on the cross, meditating on one station each service.

We enter this journey with the penitent's prayer, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" (Psalm 139:23-24)

We pray that you find peace and be blest by these reflections on God's grace and gift of love. Amen.

WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP

Music

Ben D.

Welcome

*Good evening and welcome to Lent at St Stephen's Lutheran Church in West St Paul, MN. Our 2021 Journey to the Cross focus' our meditation on eight Biblical Stations of the Cross. We are reflecting on one station at each of our midweek Lenten meditations, including Ash Wednesday through Holy Week. This evening we are focusing on **Station 5: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments**. The remaining stations will be meditated on in the subsequent weeks leading up to Good Friday, Jesus Dies on the Cross. If you've missed previous meditations on the Stations of the Cross, you may view those on our Facebook page, sslcwsp.*

Blessing

*All may make the sign of the cross,
the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God the father,
and the Communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

And also with you.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 118:19-29

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the LORD's gate; the righteous shall enter through it.
I will give thanks because you have answered me.
You have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.
This has come from the LORD.
It is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day on which the Lord has acted.
Let us shout with joy and rejoice in it.
Please, save us, O LORD! Please!
O LORD, please bring success!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
The LORD is God
He has given us light.
With cords bind the festival sacrifice to the horns of the altar.
You are my God, and I will give thanks to you.
You are my God, I will extol you.
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
For his steadfast love endures forever.

Hymn

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

ELW #338 vs. 1, 2

**Beneath the cross of Jesus
I long to take my stand;
the shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land,
a home within a wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat
and burdens of the day.**

**Upon the cross of Jesus,
my eye at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me.
And from my contrite heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess:
the wonder of his glorious love
and my unworthiness.**

Text: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1830-1869
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Prayer

O Lord, we are gathered together here this day as your people,
as those who have been called out of darkness into your marvelous light.
We are here only because you have loved us and been faithful
across the generations that we might be your people.
And yet we quickly confess that we are not worthy of that love.

As we contemplate the Cross and what it means,
we are filled with joy and wonder at the sacrifice that Jesus
has made to show us light in the darkness
and offer us life in the midst of death.
We confess that we have nothing to offer in return for that sacrifice,
nothing that will match such love.
We know that only love can respond to such a gift.
Yet we know that we are not always loving or lovable.

But you remain steadfastly faithful to us.
You love us even when we are not lovable,
and remain steadfast in your grace that calls us
to follow the example of Jesus who is the Christ.

We are committed to that journey,
to be followers of the One who has given so much
that we might be sons and daughters of God.
But sometimes the journey that we take in following Jesus
who is the Christ is not all light and joy.
Sometimes the Way is rough and dimly lit.
Sometimes the darkness of life threatens to engulf the light.

And so we cry out to you, O Lord.
Forgive us for our sometimes faltering steps.
Show us more clearly the Way.
Shine anew the light of your presence into our lives
so strongly that a new love for You will be kindled.
Light within us a love beyond emotion and sentimentality,
a love that is willing to lay aside all privilege and self-centeredness.
Grow within us a love that is willing to surrender
all our fears and uncertainties to you,
that desires nothing more than to love God
with all our being and to love those around us
with the same faithfulness with which you love us.

Now, as we begin this journey of the Cross,
we open our hearts and minds to you.
We lay aside for these moments the trivialities of our life
and bring ourselves into your presence.
Speak to us what we need to hear.
And help us to hear, not just the words that are spoken,
but your Word spoken afresh in our hearts.

Speak, for your servants are listening.

[A short time of silent prayer and meditation]

Let us continue our journey.

Stations of the Cross

Station 5: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Leader:

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus,
they took his clothes and divided them into four parts,
one for each soldier.
They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless,
woven in one piece from the top.
So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it,
but cast lots for it to see who will get it."
This was to fulfill what the scripture says,
"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."
And that is what the soldiers did. (John 19:23-25a)

Speaker:

Jesus, I want to follow you on this journey.
But I cannot watch this. I must turn away as you are humiliated.
You came into this world amid celebration and anticipation.
Angels sang in the heavens to celebrate your birth.
As a child, Magi from the East paid homage to you as to a king.

The people followed you by the thousands as you taught on the hillsides of Galilee.
They wanted to make you king!
Just a few days ago the crowds followed you in the streets of Jerusalem
singing praises to God: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! "

Yet now, you are forced to suffer the worst of human indignity.
You stand alone as the soldiers strip from you the last thing that you possess,
and play games to see who will claim it.

Just yesterday, you removed your cloak and laid it aside to wash your disciples' feet.
You called them to follow your example as a symbol of humility and service to others.
Now you allow others to strip you of your clothes.
You allow them to publically disgrace and ridicule you.
You are left with nothing, not even human decency.

Are you still trying to teach us something about what it means to serve others?
Is your surrender to such degradation a model
for how we are to live in the world as your followers?
I don't like such an idea.
I would rather walk with you into Jerusalem with the praise of the people
ringing in my ears than to risk such humiliation.
I *want* to follow you!
But is this really what it means to be a follower,
that I must lay aside everything and risk this kind of degradation?
And yet, that is exactly what *you* are doing.

Leader:

O Lord, forgive me for wanting to take the path of glory and reward.
Forgive me for my selfishness that wants to serve you in easy ways
and seeks the reward of others' praise.
Lord, teach me the humility of spirit that replaces self-centeredness
with a sacrificial spirit.
Make me vulnerable so that I may follow your example.
Help me see those around me who are in need.
Give me the courage to lay aside the things that I use to hide from their need,
and find ways to minister to others as you have shown us.

O Lord, hear our prayers.

Hymn

"Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery"

ELW #334 vs. 3, 4

**Christ, you lead and we shall follow,
stumbling though our steps may be;
one with you in joy and sorrow,
we the river, you the sea,
we the river, you the sea.**

**Light of life beyond conceiving,
mighty Spirit of our Lord;
give new strength to our believing,
give us faith to live your word.**

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
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[The fifth candle is extinguished followed by
a short time of silent prayer and meditation.]

[Screen fades to Black. Silence]



Leaders in Today's Service

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. John Snider
Lay Liturgist	Debbie Pirkl
Director of Worship	Bryon Dockter
Song Leader	Deborah Ellis, Philip Dahl
Christian Music Leader	Ben D.
Lectors	Dylan Donahue
Audio Visual Ministry	Norm Goetzke, Keith Gregory, Jan Perkins
Prayer Chain	Rachel Circle, Mary Circle, Kathy Ericson, Abby Vavra
Altar Guild	Lori Ritt
Outdoor Street Sign	Jerry Thoreson



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Bulletin Acknowledgements

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