

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEEK OF DECEMBER 26, 2021

IN OUR PRAYERS: Jim Cleveland; Carolyn Wilkins; Jack & Lureen Vaught; Tony Sikora; Cindy; Aiden Snyder; Mason Salomon; Michelle Zeller; Peter Lange; Dan Ludban

THANK YOU to everyone for helping with the Stockings for Vets project. We did 108 stockings—the most we've ever done! Thanks again. -Barb Sheets

NO MIDWEEK SERVICE this Wednesday, December 29.

NO BIBLE STUDY this Thursday, December 30.

NEW YEAR'S EVE & NEW YEAR'S DAY services are Friday, Dec. 31, at 7:00pm, and Saturday, Jan. 1, at 9:00am. Join us!

ELDERS & COUNCIL will be installed next Sunday, January 2, at both services. Elders and Council Members: attend your preferred service time. You do not need to attend both (unless you want to!).

ELDERS & COUNCIL meet next Tuesday, January 4, at 6 & 7pm, respectively.

THE VOTERS' MEETING for the first quarter of 2022 is two weeks from today, Sunday, January 9, between services.

CALENDAR

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| Sun. Dec. 26 (St. Stephen) | 8:00 & 10:00am Holy Communion <i>No Bible Study / Sunday School</i> <i>No Confirmation</i> |
| Wed. Dec. 29 | <i>No service</i> |
| Thu. Dec. 30 | <i>No Bible Study</i> |
| Fri. Dec. 31 | 7:00pm Holy Communion (New Year's Eve) |
| Sat. Jan. 1 | 9:00am Holy Communion |
| Sun. Jan. 2 (Christmas 2) | 8:00 & 10:00am Holy Communion Installation of Elders / Council 9:00am Sunday School / Bible Study <i>No Confirmation</i> |
| Tue. Jan. 4 | 6:00 / 7:00pm Elders / Church Council |
| Sun. Jan. 9 | 9:00am Voters' Meeting |

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St. Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), was one of the Church’s first seven deacons. He was appointed by the leaders of the Church to distribute food and other necessities to the poor in the growing Christian community in Jerusalem, thereby giving the apostles more time for their public ministry of proclamation (Acts 6:2-5). When some of his colleagues became jealous of him, they brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin and falsely charged him with blaspheming against Moses (Acts 6:9-14). Stephen’s confession of faith, along with his rebuke of the members of the Sanhedrin for rejecting their Messiah and being responsible for His death, so infuriated them that they dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. Stephen is honored as the Church’s first martyr and for his words of commendation and forgiveness as he lay dying: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” and “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:59-60).

Valerius Herberger writes of St. Stephen:

Reverent hearts, it is an old, laudable custom to commemorate St. Stephen on the second day of Christmas. For just as the innocent children were the first martyrs after Christ’s birth, so also St. Stephen was the first after Christ’s ascension to praise our glorious King Jesus with his blood. Our predecessors used to say, “Yesterday Christ was born into the world, so that today Stephen would be born into heaven.” This is speaking rightly and truly of the fruit of Jesus Christ’s birth. If the Christ Child had not been born, the entire world would be lost. Thus Stephen’s sleep in death and entrance through the open heaven to the glory of God in eternal life will show us well what great usefulness and goodness we have from the incarnation and birth of the Child Jesus.

Stephen means a “garland” or a “crown.” Think here of our beautiful Christmas consolation. Whoever believes in the name of Jesus is righteous before God and can expect a glorious crown. . . Those who truly love our glorious King Jesus Christ shall be certain of God’s grace in life, in death, and after death. They shall not die, but live, and proclaim the work of the Lord.

Both quotations from *Treasury of Daily Prayer* (CPH, 2008), pp. 1057-8.