



Saint Stephens UCC
Where God is still speaking,



It seems like everyone in Merrill wants to know what's going on at Saint Stephens!!

--Photo credit: Mike Southcombe

October 11, 2026 | 9:00 AM | TWENTIETH Sunday after Pentecost

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
You're welcome here!

Technical Directors: Jody Meyer, Corey Dornbrack

Organist: Darlene Johnson

Music Director: Tiffany Bucheger

Faith Formation Director: Kari Weiland

On most Sundays, children will begin in worship and be dismissed to their Sunday School classes after the “Time for All Ages.” On Communion Sunday, they will start in Sunday School and join their families for Communion during the service.

For those children staying in worship, please use the bookmarks available to mark the pages for today’s hymns. Go through the bulletin with your children and circle the things in which they might be interested (Children’s time, hymns, helping with the offering). Mark the bulletin with symbols for when it is time to be quiet and listen, join in the hymn, read a prayer aloud, etc.

Busy Bags are available in the church entryway. Quite often, children can absorb what is going on in church if their hands are occupied and their minds do not have to focus so much on “behaving.” It takes a great deal of energy and concentration for a child to stay quiet and still. Please use the busy bags to occupy their hands so they are free to listen. Nudge them when it is time for a hymn and ask them to sing along with you. Encourage them to come forward for the Time for All Ages and to participate in other ways during the service.

POINTS TO PONDER PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

*“If you are a dreamer, come in,
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...
If you’re a pretender come sit by my fire
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in!
Come in!” — Shel Silverstein*



SOMETHING TO INSPIRE

WELCOME

PRELUDE

GREETING AND INVOCATION

Pastor: Morning has broken! In the name of the triune God: the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit, I greet you on this glorious morn.

ALL: Amen!

Let us pray...Amen.

* CALL TO WORSHIP (Inspired by Psalm 106)

One: Who can express the mighty work of the Holy One?

Many: We who gather praise the Holy One for God is good. God's steadfast love endures forever!

One: Who can proclaim the redemptive acts of the Holy One?

Many: We who gather praise the Holy One for justice and righteousness. God shows favor and mercy toward the people.

One: Who can declare the wondrous and awesome deeds of the Holy One?

Many: We who gather praise the Holy One! Praise the Holy One!

* CELEBRATION HYMN

"We Are Walking"

#442

* PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Holy One, we acknowledge that you have modeled a way of being in the world that we struggle to adopt. You invite us to love the neighbor we do not know and the enemy that we do. We encourage us to prioritize the marginalized and center the oppressed even when our own needs overwhelm us. You invite us into your kingdom, and the cost of discipleship sometimes seems to be more than we can afford. Holy One, we need strength and hope for the journey. Let your surpassing peace enable us to pursue a worthy and pleasing life. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

Siblings in Christ, the Holy One is near and responds to your prayer. Remember, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you."

* RESPONSE

“Christ Our Peace” 2X

Text and Music: Marty Haugen

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Christ, our peace, you break down the walls that divide us;

Christ, our peace, come, make us one body in you.

* PASSING THE PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

A TIME FOR ALL AGES

A LESSON FROM TORAH

Exodus 32:1-14

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” ² Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” ³ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took these from them, formed them in a mold, and cast an image of a calf, and they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.” ⁶ They rose early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being, and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to revel.

⁷ The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸ they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ ” ⁹ The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰ Now let me alone so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, and of you I will make a great nation.”

¹¹ But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’?

Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" ¹⁴ And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

THE GOOD NEWS

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

MESSAGE

PRAYERS of the FAITHFUL

... merciful God,

Hear our prayers.

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY
OFFERTORY

* PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

"God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending" vs. 1

#606

* PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Generous God, receive our offerings as acceptance to your invitation to the kingdom life. May they be used to spread abundance, generate hope, and meet needs. Bless us as we give to grow in generosity, gratitude, and grace. We give thanks for this opportunity to participate in your kingdom come and your will be done in our communities and world. Amen.

* INVITATION

* COMMUNION HYMN

*"As We Gather At Your Table"**See Nxt Pg*

**As we gather at your table,
as we listen to your word,
help us know, O God, your presence;
let our hearts and minds be stirred.
Nourish us with sacred story
till we claim it as our own;
teach us through this holy banquet
how to make Love's victory known.**

**Turn our worship into witness
in the sacrament of life;
send us forth to love and serve you,
bringing peace where there is strife.
Give us, Christ, your great compassion
to forgive as you forgave;
may we still behold your image
in the world you died to save.**

**Gracious Spirit, help us summon
other guests to share that feast
where triumphant Love will welcome
those who had been last and least.
There no more will envy blind us
nor will pride our peace destroy,
as we join with saints and angels
to repeat the sounding joy.**

Matt. 22:1-10; Luke 14:16-24

Carl P. Daw, Jr., 1989

1 As we gath - er at your ta - ble, as we lis - ten to your word,
 2 Turn our wor - ship in - to wit - ness in the sac - ra - ment of life;
 3 Gra - cious Spir - it, help us sum - mon oth - er guests to share that feast

help us know, O God, your pres - ence; let our hearts and minds be stirred.
 send us forth to love and serve you, bring - ing peace where there is strife.
 where tri - um - phant Love will wel - come those who had been last and least.

Nour - ish us with sa - cred sto - ry till we claim it as our own;
 Give us, Christ, your great com - pas - sion to for - give as you for - gave;
 There no more will en - vy bind us nor will pride our peace de - stroy,

teach us through this ho - ly ban - quet how to make Love's vic - tory known.
 may we still be - hold your im - age in the world you died to save.
 as we join with saints and an - gels to re - peat the sound - ing joy.

In this hymn, commissioned by an Episcopal parish in Virginia for the celebration of its tricentennial, Carl P. Daw, Jr., utilized a familiar phrase from Isaac Watts' "Joy to the World," which was the motto for the celebration: "Repeat the sounding joy."

Tune: BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7.D.
 The Sacred Harp, 1844
 Harm. The New Century Hymnal, 1992

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just to give God thanks and praise.

* SANCTUS

*Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty,
the whole universe speaks of your glory,
O God Most High.*

*Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of our God!
Hosanna in the highest!*

INSTITUTION

...Let us proclaim to all worlds the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

CONSECRATION

...Now and unto the ages.

THE GREAT AMEN (sing together)

#320

Al-le-lu-ia, a-men, a-men.

PREPARING THE SERVERS

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

LAMB OF GOD VIDEO

(The inner ring of cups contains white grape juice; 2 outer rings contain red wine. Please use the bowls on either side to dispose of your used cups. Gluten free wafers are available, please let the server know if needed.)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

For these gifts, O God, we thank you.

For your grace, O God, we praise you.

For your love, O God, we adore you. Amen.

* CLOSING HYMN

"Rejoice, You Pure in Heart" (vs. 1-4)

#15

*** BENEDICTION**

As you go, take the invitation with you...

To receive and give hospitality.

May you know God and be known by God.

May you see Christ in the most unlikely of places and may others see Christ in you.

And may the Spirit of God dwell in you and shine through you in the world and for the glory of God.

Amen.

Go in peace. You go with power to heal a broken world.

Thanks be to God.

*** RESPONSE**

“Go, Make a Difference” (vs. 1)

Words and Music: Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek ©1997

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Chorus

Go make a diff'rence, we can make a diff'rence

Go make a diff'rence in the world

Go make a diff'rence we can make a diff'rence

Go make a diff'rence in the world

We are the salt in the earth, called to let the people see

The love of God in you and me

We are the light of the world, not to be hidden, but be seen

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Chorus

Go make a diff'rence, we can make a diff'rence

Go make a diff'rence in the world

Go make a diff'rence we can make a diff'rence

Go make a diff'rence in the world

TAKING THE LESSONS HOME

One of the ways to help children understand how much they are loved in the church is to look around and name all the people who work to “make church happen” for them. Ask them if they know who restocks the goodies basket, who organizes Sunday School and restocks the Busy Bags. Who picks the songs we sing and who plays the music? Think about who cleans up after church and who restocks the paper towels in the restrooms—and all the members who contribute to buy those paper towels, soap and floor cleaner. What are some other things they take for granted? When they name some of them, help them to find out who takes care of those things. Ask your children if they can think of ways they can help around the church.

Then, at home, go through a similar exercise. Who does the laundry, makes the meals, takes care of the yard and makes sure the car is safe and reliable? Talk about ways they can help more around the house. Ask them at what age they think they will be ready to do more of these things.

When doing these exercises, the goal is to develop a spirit of thanksgiving, not a burden of guilt. As they name things they notice being done and who is doing them, say a prayer of thanks for that person or for those people. In the same way at home, give thanks for the gift of caring for each other and pray with thanks that the older we get, the more we can do.



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR FUNDRAISING BANQUET

\$50/PERSON

**OCTOBER 24, 2026
LES & JIM'S | 4:00 PM**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT SAINT STEPHENS UCC, NICOLET BANK,
OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO PURCHASE ONLINE (FEES APPLY).

****TICKETS INCLUDE DINNER, TWO DRINK TICKETS,
AND ENTRY INTO THE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING.****

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Thank you!

Musicians today are Tiffany Bucheger and Darlene Johnson.

Radio Ministry is sponsored in memory of Laura & Franklin Plautz from Bob & Jolene Plautz.

Livestream is sponsored by Dennis & Sharon Woller in honor of our sons and daughter-in-law's, Greg & Chrissy and also Chad & Jill.

Technical Directors: Jody Meyer, Corey Dornbrack

Trunk or Treat will take place on October 31 from 4 PM to 7 PM in the Kuck Lounge. If you are interested in hosting a trunk for this event, please sign up at the kiosk! We aim to have at least 10 to 12 trunks. This is a fun activity that our church provides for the community. We hope to see you there!

