



Saint Stephens UCC
Where God is still speaking,

Jim Pekol Polka



September 20, 2026 | 9:00 AM | SEVENTEENTH 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

Polka Service
featuring
The Jim Pekol Band

Copyright notice: The music today is from a variety of sources with most of it from Fr. Frank Perkovich's original Polka Mass, first celebrated in 1973 in Eveleth, MN. Two Lutheran pastors have contributed greatly to the Polka Service music repertoire, Pastors Glenn Beard and Edward Battiste. These three composers generously shared their work with churches throughout the U.S. and the world, with Fr. Perkovich celebrating Polka Masses in Slovenia and Croatia, as well as at the Vatican with Pope John Paul II in audience. They have allowed their words to be changed to fit the specific national/ethnic festivals around the country.

In addition to the above pastors, we need to acknowledge the contributions of Mary Cvek and Gladys Waller for original lyrics to some of the songs.

To the best of our knowledge, all of these songs and the variations made for worship in protestant churches have been generously made available with general permission for use in worship services under copyright law.

This particular performance by The Jim Pekol Band is, of course, copyrighted and may not be reproduced or broadcast except by St. Stephens UCC through our streaming and social media accounts without the express, written consent of Jim Pekol.

POINTS TO PONDER PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

"To know what we are doing, and to know that what we are doing is destroying our life, and still to go on doing it: can this be called anything but madness?"

— Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*

SOMETHING TO INSPIRE

WELCOME

PRELUDE

* GATHERING MUSIC

“Welcome to Worship”

We come to worship, worship today

We'll play the music so we can pray.

Bring in the people, fill every chair.

We'll play a polka for everyone here.

We come to worship and praise the Lord.

We'll read some scripture, feed on his word.

We'll greet our neighbors, we're glad we came.

We're here to worship in Jesus' holy name.

We come to worship, give God our care.

We know he hears us, hears every prayer.

He understands us, wants us to pray.

Let's bow to worship, worship today.

* CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 105 responsively)

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon God's name; make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

Sing to the Lord, sing praises, and speak of all God's marvelous works.

Glory in God's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Search for the strength of the Lord; continually seek God's face.

Remember the marvels God has done, the wonders and the judgments of God's mouth,

O offspring of Abraham, God's servant, O children of Jacob, God's chosen ones. Make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples. Hallelujah!

You led out your people with silver and gold; in all their tribes there was not one that stumbled.

Egypt was glad to see them go, because they were a-afraid of them.

You spread out a cloud for a covering and a fire to give light by night.

They asked, and you brought quail, and satisfied them with bread from heaven.

You opened the rock, and water flowed, so the river ran in the dry places.
For you remembered your holy word and Abraham your servant. Make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

So you led forth your people with gladness, your chosen with shouts of joy.
You gave your people the lands of the nations, and they took the fruit of others' toil,

that they might keep your statutes and observe your teachings. Hallelujah!
Make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples. Hallelujah!

* PRAISE HYMN *"Come Now and Worship" (tune: Rosamunde)*

**Come now and worship,
Come now and worship the Lord.
Come now and worship
Join us as we sing and adore.
Gather together;
Give God the praise that is due!
Hear us as we come to worship
Singing praise to you.**

**We bring our gifts
gifts of ourselves and our lives
Fears, sins and worries,
All that can cause us such strife
This celebration
Draws us all closer to you.
Hear us as we come to worship,
Singing praise to you.**

**We're here to praise you,
Praise you for this brand new day.
You're here to join us,
Teach us and show us your way.
Mold us and shape us,
Help us to be more like you.
Hear us as we come to worship,
Singing praise to you.**

* PASSING THE PEACE
The Peace of Christ be with you all.
And also with you.

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

A LESSON FROM TORAH

Exodus 16:2-15

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” ⁸ And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.”

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites: ‘Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’ ” ¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’ ”

¹³ In the evening quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

THE GOOD NEWS

Matthew 20:1-16

[And Jesus said:] "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.

And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

This is the good news. In this truth we find eternal life.

Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE

* HYMN OF THE DAY *"Lord, Teach Us How to Love"* (in bulletin)

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

... merciful God,

Hear our prayers.

LORD'S PRAYER

MISSION FOCUS Neighbors in Need

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

OFFERTORY *"Say Thank You Lord"*

* PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS *"Above the Mountains"*

**High above the mountain tops the angels sing,
Praise the Lord, for he is King.
And we answer from this humble church below,
Praise the Lord, forever so.**

Chorus

**All the world with joyful heart,
Singing praise of love.
His blessings sent to all of us from up above,
It is right in thanking him and praising him.
Amen. Amen.**

**In this humble church the angels join in praise,
Glory be to God our King.
Through his love, we ask of him to be with us,
To the end, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Chorus

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of increase and bounty, Source of all good things:
we offer these gifts as a portion of that which you have given us.
May these gifts be as loaves and fishes
for those who find themselves in poverty or hunger.
**May this act of giving bring about change:
change in our lives, change in the lives we touch,
change in the systems that harm.**

Through Christ, who gave so much.
Amen.

*** CLOSING HYMN**

"God Sends the Sunshine"

Chorus

**God sends the sunshine, the lovely sunshine,
He sends the rainbow after the rain.
We'll never know just how much he loves us.
Please don't take the sunshine away.**

**The other night Lord as I lay thinking,
How much I need you every day,
I realized God it's time to tell you,
That I'm thankful as I pray.**

**When I consider the lovely flowers
And how your sunshine makes them grow.
It's then I know Lord, you really love me.
It's your way to tell me so.**

**You walk beside me in all my trials,
You give me strength for all I do,
So as we meet here, I'm very thankful,
That I can come to worship you.**

*** BENEDICTION**

As our worship service ends, our worship through service begins anew.
Now as we leave from this place,
but not from God's presence,
let us remember God's still-speaking voice.
And may God send grace to go with us,
peace to keep us,
and love to surround us as we travel.
Go forth empowered to love and
speak God's holy truth each day.

Amen.

Go in peace. Remember the refugee.

Thanks be to God.

*** BENEDICTION RESPONSE**

"Amazing Grace"

POSTLUDE

Lord, Teach Us How to Love

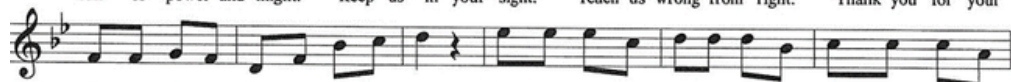
Tune: Baruska - Bohemian Polka



1. Our — Fa - ther up in hea - ven,
2. Je - sus Christ our Lord and Sa - vior,
3. God of love, O Ho - ly Spi - rit,



hear us as we pray. Take our sins a - way; help us live each day. Thank you for the
you came down to us. Died up - on the cross to re - deem our loss. Teach us how to
full of power and might. Keep us in your sight. Teach us wrong from right. Thank you for your



gifts you give us. You care for our needs. When you sent your Son to save us, you showed us you
love each oth - er as you love us all. Help us fol - low your ex - am - ple, car - ing for each
love and gra - ces, make us pure and strong. Be our hope and con - so - la - tion. Guide our wea - ry



loved us true. Hear us as we sing your prais - es; help us live our lives for you. Lord,
oth - ers needs. Show - ing that we all are bro - thers by our ve - ry words and deeds.
steps to thee. Through your gui - dance we all hope to live with you e - ter - nal - ly!



teach us how to love as we fol - low in your way. Oh, — Lord, teach us how to love



as we fol - low in your way.

Thank you!

Musicians today are Tiffany Bucheger and Darlene Johnson.

Radio Ministry is sponsored in memory of Gay & Sally Oberg from family.

Livestream is sponsored by Diana Catlin in honor of her great granddaughter and grandchildren for their birthdays!

Technical Directors: Jody Meyer, Corey Dornbrack

TAKING THE LESSONS HOME

“That’s not fair!” Children develop a keen sense of justice and are not afraid to point it out when they feel cheated out of something. Even if an older brother or sister had to wait for a certain privilege, younger siblings often think they should be able to enjoy a privilege before they have put in the years and demonstrate a maturity ready for the privilege.

This story illustrating God’s generosity challenges our culture built on reward for work. When we walk through the church doors, however, we enter a place where we get a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. Ask your children how they feel when everyone is treated lovingly and if they have noticed when that happens at the church and at home.

Our Fundraising Banquet is almost SOLD OUT—with fewer than 25 tickets remaining!

We have an exciting evening planned, including:

- Partner Agency of the Year awards
- A special presentation from Lisa Hass, who has been a teacher in our school district for 30 years
- Amazing raffle prizes
- A cash raffle and 50/50 raffle
- A delicious Smoke House buffet from Les & Jim's

You'll also have the opportunity to sponsor a child—or even multiple children—throughout the year and make a lasting difference in their lives.

And that's not all! This year's grand door prize is a one-night stay in a two-bedroom living room suite for up to six guests at Kalahari in Wisconsin Dells!

Stay tuned for exciting raffle prize sneak peeks! We can't wait to see you there!



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR FUNDRAISING BANQUET

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

\$50/PERSON **ALMOST SOLD OUT!!**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
SAINT STEPHENS UCC AND NICOLET BANK

TICKETS INCLUDE DINNER, TWO DRINK TICKETS, AND ENTRY INTO THE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING, WHICH IS A ONE-NIGHT STAY IN A 2-BEDROOM LIVING ROOM SUITE AT KALAHARI FOR UP TO 6 GUESTS.

 [**www.foodforkidsmerrill.org**](http://www.foodforkidsmerrill.org)

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