



ST. PETER'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

302 MERCHANTS AVE.
FORT ATKINSON, WI 920-563-3889



Virtual Worship at St. Peter's – 10:00 AM Sunday Mornings

We have been preparing to once again be the main source of worship for the St. Peter's community and anyone else who would like to join in for quite some time. We have our production equipment; it is now a matter of getting everything initialized and set up. Sunday, January 3 we will premiere a service at 10:00 AM. This service will be pre-recorded on an iPhone and the quality will be approximate to our Christmas Eve service. There is reasonable expectation that live virtual services will happen by January 10. Regardless, we will offer worship on Sundays from your very own church at 10:00 AM on our YouTube channel.

I am also going to submit a special circumstances. The irregular distribution of communion due to the pandemic. If the offer drive-up reception of the sacrament will be after the reception will be after the church. You will need to be Friday prior so that we can have the sacrament ready for you.



plan for communion under the diocese has allowed for communion for pastoral reasons. If the plan is approved, we will offer the sacrament once a month. The 10:00 service has been planned so people can be able to get to the church by 1:00 PM on the day of the service and have your

My greatest wish is to be able to worship together in person. Until a sufficient number of people are vaccinated and our disease count goes down considerably, we will remain a virtual parish – still strong, together, and dedicated to spreading the gospel message in word and deed.

God bless you all,
Mother Mindy

A HUGE THANK YOU!



In December, St. Peter's once again had our turn distributing food at the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry. We're giving a great big thank you to everyone that worked the pantry this month. The hardest job, that of coordinator, was done phenomenally by Laurie McHenry. Thank you Laurie for all your hard work, in coordinating, in working, and in being our representative on the Food Pantry board!

Christmas Eve Sermon – December 24, 2020 Mother Mindy Valentine Davis

A light from on high will dawn upon [us] ... To shine upon and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct and guide our feet ... into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. Isaiah 9:2

This is not a typical Christmas sermon because this is not a typical Christmas year. I promise you that if you hang in there, I will get to the hope and good news, so stay tuned. But I have to start with the discomfort of our current situation. I have to tell you that our Isaiah reading, I feel it. I really feel it. The people who have walked in darkness – that certainly feels like what we are going through right now. Let's back up several months to Easter.

Just as Easter was the Easteriest Easter we'll likely ever Easter, this is the Christmasyist Christmas we'll likely ever Christmas. Please ignore that terrible grammar and my making of new verbs and I'll explain. Easter Morning found us huddled in our homes, scared of a deadly threat – just like the disciples on Easter Morning. Instead of the Novel Coronavirus, the disciples were scared of the Romans and Temple authorities coming to arrest them, drag them away, and kill them, just like they did Jesus. They were in mourning for what seemed lost – Jesus, their Lord. They did not heed his admonitions that he was going to die, but death would not be the end. The women who went out to finish preparing and anointing the body of our precious Jesus were the essential workers. They were the ones brave enough to step out and do what needed done to keep the world on turning. That sense of loss that we had, that sense of hopelessness, that missing communion with Jesus, that sense that things are not the same and maybe never would be – that is exactly what the disciples were going through and our being in that similar mindset made it the Easteriest Easter that we'll likely ever Easter.

And this Christmas, we feel the weight of the last 10 months. We think we see hope; I mean there are vaccines! The vaccines that are carrying the weight of so many of our hopes are starting to be distributed. That vaccines may give us hope of coming out of the house and getting back to some normalcy, but there's more than just Coronavirus bringing us down. We have political dysfunction and divisions polarizing us. We have cyberthreats mucking about trying to cause confusion and fear. We have poor that are getting poorer and rich that would sell out someone for a new pair of Gucci sandals. The systematic racism that has imbued our society for decades – you know, the racism that many of us thought wasn't an issue, but our black and brown brothers and sisters have been telling us about – most of those who were blind have finally admitted that there's a problem and that there are powers and principalities that are keeping people of color from the American Dream. We now see. There is oppression and illness and death surrounding us – and that's the way it was when Jesus was born.

Jesus was born when Judea was under the yoke of the Roman Empire. The burden the empire placed on everyday people was not easy or light. There was division between Jews and Gentiles, and even hatred amongst those who believed in the same God. You remember the Samaritans? They also believed in the God of Israel, but they were seen as enemies. People that believe in the same God regard each other as enemies – sound familiar? Harod had such oppressive power that he could order the death of infants of a certain age and gender. The poor were poor and the rich were rich and would sell out someone for a pair of sandals. The people were walking in darkness and boy did they need some light. That light was promised to us. Let's go back to the Luke passage I quoted, “A light from on high will

dawn upon [us] ... To shine upon and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct and guide our feet ... into the way of peace.”

Folks, maybe we're walking in darkness, but this Christmas is the best time to remind you that the light of the world came into the world, Jesus, and the darkness cannot, could not, and will not triumph over that light. Jesus may have died, but Jesus was resurrected and reigns at the right hand of God Almighty. The good news we have is that we may feel like we're walking in darkness, but we HAVE seen a brilliant light – the light that was promised to us, the light that can never be extinguished!

This light has come into the world. Born of a human, of Mary Our Mother, and begotten through the power of the Holy Spirit. And oh how so we desperately need that light.

Because of the generosity of the Mason's Knights Templar, I was gifted a Holy Land Pilgrimage, which I went on in early February. At Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, I descended into the cave (yes it was a cave USED as a stable) where they believe Jesus was born. At the place where they believe that Jesus was placed, there is a beautiful many pointed star. And whether it was the convergence of two planets or some other kind of astronomical anomaly, the light that shone in the sky at Jesus' birth reflected the fact that the light of the world was born unto us.

The joy of Christmas is all wrapped up in the fact that because Jesus was born, the darkness will never, ever overcome us. Jesus has already triumphed over that darkness! How desperately we need to remember that we have the light of Jesus. This Christmas should be the most joyous of Christmases because it is the reminder that while we are walking in and through darkness, the darkness is not the final answer. The darkness of death, of pandemic, of systematic racism, of empire, of the powers and principalities of this world shall not overcome us! The final answer is the light, and the light of the world is Jesus.

If I had one message I would like you to get out of this sermon, it is that if we base the joy of Christmas on Jesus, on the light of the world, nothing could ever take that joy away. Christmas will always come each year, the reminder of that precious baby in Bethlehem who grew up to show us how to love and live and then gives us the promise of everlasting life. If we focus that God came to Earth, humbly born as an average person, that Jesus knows what it's like to live in this world with all that entails – the good, the bad, and the ugly, we can rejoice! And if you're anything like me who absolutely loves babies, just the thought of a newborn can make you smile. And everything else on top of that is extra, should just broaden your joy, and is bonus.

So, in years to come: Getting together with our family – bonus! Getting to make wonderful foods and Christmas Cookies – bonus! Going to parties and picking out ugly sweaters – bonus! (at least for the extroverts out there) Getting to worship in person at your church – bonus! And something that hopefully we will never ever take for granted now that we know what it is to do without. All those things should ADD to your joy, and without them, as many of us are this Christmas, there should still be joy there because we have Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord, again I tell you rejoice! If you base your Christmas joy on Christ, no matter what happens on any given Christmas, you will always have a joyful Christmas.

Jesus, our Savior, the light of the world, He's here! He's born! Rejoice and be glad. And if you have any bonuses that compound that joy, then give glory to God saying, “Glory to God in the Highest Heaven,” just like the Angels did when appearing to the Shepherds. Joy to the world, the Lord is come – Repeat the sounding joy!

STEPHEN - DEACON AND PROTOMARTYR (26 DEC NT)

All that we know about Stephen the Protomartyr (that is, the first martyr of the Christian Church) is found in chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Acts.

The early Christian congregations, like the Jewish synagogues, had a program of assistance for needy widows, and some of the Greek-speaking Jews in the Jerusalem congregation complained that their widows were being neglected. The apostles replied: "We cannot both preach and administer financial matters. Choose seven men from among yourselves, respected, Spirit-filled, and of sound judgement, and let them be in charge of the accounts, and we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word."

The people accordingly chose seven men, including Stephen, and the apostles laid their hands on them. They are traditionally considered to be the first deacons, although the Scriptures do not use the word to describe them. (The Scriptures do refer to officials called deacons in the local congregations, without being very specific about their duties; and a century or more later, we find the organized charities of each local congregation in the hands of its deacons.)

Stephen was an eloquent and fiery speaker, and a provocative one. (Some readers have speculated that some of his fellow Christians wanted to put him in charge of alms in the hope that he would administer more and talk less.) His blunt declarations that the Temple service was no longer the means by which penitent sinners should seek reconciliation with God enraged the Temple leaders, who caused him to be stoned to death. As he died, he said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." One of those who saw the stoning and approved of it was Saul (or Paul) of Tarsus, who took an active part in the general persecution of Christians that followed the death of Stephen, but who was later led to become a Christian himself.

We remember Stephen on December 26, the day after Christmas. Hence the song

*Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen,*

describes an action of the king on the day after Christmas Day. The tune used with this song is older than the words and was previously used with a hymn often sung on the feasts of Stephen and other martyrs. It begins:

*Christian friends, your voices raise.
Wake the day with gladness.
God himself to joy and praise
turns our human sadness:
Joy that martyrs won their crown,
opened heaven's bright portal,
when they laid the mortal down
for the life immortal.*

by James Kiefer

Source: <http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Stephen.htm>



Relief of St. Stephen, from a Venetian altarpiece

JOHN - APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST (27 DEC NT)

John, son of Zebedee, was one of the twelve apostles of Our Lord. Together with his brother James and with Simon Peter, he formed a kind of inner circle of Three among the Twelve, in that those three were privileged to behold the miracle of the Great Catch of Fish (Luke 5:10), the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29), the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37 = Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1 = Mark 9:2 = Luke 9:28), and the Agony in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37 = Mark 14:33). He expressed a willingness to undergo martyrdom (Matthew 20:22 = Matthew 10:39) ~ as did the other apostles (Matthew 26:35 = Mark 14:31) ~ and is accordingly called a martyr in intention. However, we have ancient testimony that, although imprisoned and exiled for his testimony to the Gospel, he was eventually released and died a natural death in Ephesus: "a martyr in will but not in deed."

John is credited with the authorship of three epistles and one Gospel, although many scholars believe that the final editing of the Gospel was done by others shortly after his death. He is also supposed by many to be the author of the book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse, although this identification is less certain. For a discussion of the authorship of the Gospel of John, consult the Web page <http://elvis.rowan.edu/~kilroy/CHRISTIA/library/john.html>



by James Kiefer

READINGS

Psalm 92;
Exodus 33:12-23;
1 John 1:1-9;
John 21:19b-24

PRAYER

Shed upon your Church, O Lord, the brightness of your light; that we, being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John, may so walk in the light of your truth, that at length we may attain to the fullness of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Source: <http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/John.htm>

This Thanksgiving (& always) I am thankful for...

- A strong marriage
- Our good health
- Our freedom

“The peace Jesus gives me, not as the world. Let not your heart be troubled, neither Let it be afraid!! John 14:27



Monthly Parish Zoom Meet-up Wednesday, January 6, 2021—6 PM

This Wednesday at 6:00 PM we will have a parish meet up via Zoom. You can use your computer and follow the directions at the link below or you can use your telephone and call in. If you use your computer, I recommend you click on the link that is contained in this week's "This Week at St. Peter's" email. You can type the below link in, but it will be easier from your e-mail.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85186178367?
pwd=TGpXN01OeDg4SVg4d2t3dWI5UjZydz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85186178367?pwd=TGpXN01OeDg4SVg4d2t3dWI5UjZydz09)

Phone Information:

Telephone Number: 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 851 8617 8367

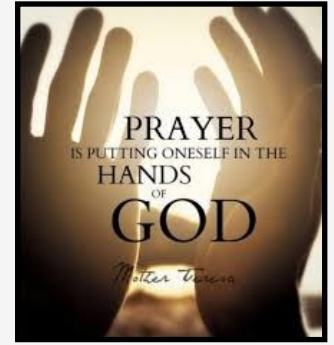
Passcode: 407125



PRAYERS

12/27/2020

- Parishioner Cycle of Prayer - John and Brenda Donohue
- Ministry Rotation Prayer - Prayer Flower Ministry
- Happy Anniversary Milo and Joan Jones
- Happy Birthday Logan Davis
- For those who are sick: Kitty Martin, Jerry Swanson, Jack Schark, Bev Wille
- Diocesan search for next Bishop
- Prayer for difficult times (coronavirus)



This prayer was developed by the Diocesan Standing Committee to pray as the search for our next Bishop progresses:

Gracious and loving God in whom we live and move and have our being, We pray for your guidance and wisdom that we may faithfully follow your calling in our own lives and as we as the Diocese of Milwaukee discern the calling of our twelfth bishop. We give you thanks for the service of Bishop Steven Miller in the life of our diocese and for the blessings that marked his ministry among us. We also pray for his family during this time of transition. We pray for those whom you have called to serve on our Standing, Search, and Transition Committees, and we pray also for those who will respond to your call to enter into discernment with us to be our next bishop. Give us all listening and prayerful hearts for this most important task. This we ask in the name of the One who said, "Come, follow me." Amen.

To add someone to the parish prayer list, please e-mail the office at: office@stpetersfort.org, or contact Eda Wilson, our prayer net coordinator, edesw2@gmail.com. If you someone you know and love has Covid-19 we would like to pray for them. Please email Eda and she will add their name to the prayer list.

Pledge Card Reminder

Please remember to send in your pledge cards. ANY giving through time, talents, and treasures, are highly appreciated and will help us work toward building God's kingdom through our missions and ministries.
THANK YOU!

Thank you!!

A great big thank you to Scott and Judy Fernhaber for the exquisite job they did decorating the nave for Christmas!

It was important to have as much normalcy as possible during these difficult times and they went above and beyond in beautifying our nave!

December 29, 2020 Newsletter

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

302 Merchants Avenue

Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

Return Service Requested



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office@stpetersfort.org

www.stpetersfort.org

Rector: Mother Mindy

Valentine Davis

ST. PETER'S MISSION STATEMENT

To Lead Each Person into a Living Relationship with Jesus Christ,
Train Them as Disciples, and Make Jesus Known to Others.