



ST. STEPHEN

DECEMBER 26



ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA

HOLY DAY

SEASONAL GREETING

Celebrant For unto us a child is born,
People **Unto us a son is given.**
Isaiah 9:6

COLLECT OF THE DAY

O Glorious Lord, your servant Stephen looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors: Grant that in all our sufferings here upon earth we may love and forgive our enemies, looking steadfastly to Jesus Christ our Lord, who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us; and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Jeremiah 26:1-9(10-11)12-15

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: ² “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. ³ It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. ⁴ You shall say to them, “Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵ and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶ then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.”

⁷ The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. ⁸ And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! ⁹ Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

(¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. ¹¹ Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”)

¹² Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. ¹³ Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. ¹⁴ But as

for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. ¹⁵ Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALTER VERSES

(In said services, the psalm verses may be placed between the Epistle and the Gospel, with the congregation standing in preparation for the Gospel. At services where there is a hymn or canticle before the Gospel, the psalm might be said between the Old Testament and Epistle, the people seated.)

Psalm 31:1-6(7-27)

- ¹ In you, O LORD, have I put my trust; *
let me never be put to confusion; deliver me in your righteousness.
- ² Bow down your ear to me, *
make haste to deliver me,
- ³ And be my strong rock and house of defense, *
that you may save me.
- ⁴ For you are my strong rock and my castle; *
be also my guide, and lead me for your Name's sake.
- ⁵ Draw me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, *
for you are my strength.
- ⁶ Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, O God of truth.
- (⁷I have hated those who hold to worthless vanities, *
and my trust has been in the LORD.
- ⁸ I will be glad and rejoice in your mercy, *
for you have considered my trouble, and have known my soul in adversities.
- ⁹ You have not shut me up in the hand of the enemy, *
but have set my feet where they may walk at liberty.
- ¹⁰ Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; *
my eye is consumed with heaviness, and also my soul and my body.
- ¹¹ For my life has grown old with heaviness, *
and my years with mourning.
- ¹² My strength fails me because of my iniquity, *
and my bones are consumed.
- ¹³ I have become a reproof among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors; *
my acquaintances are afraid of me, and those who see me in the street shrink from me.
- ¹⁴ I am utterly forgotten, as a dead man, out of mind; *
I have become like a broken vessel.
- ¹⁵ For I have heard the whispering of the multitude, and fear is on every side, *
while they conspire together against me and take their counsel to take away my life.
- ¹⁶ But my hope has been in you, O LORD; *

I have said, "You are my God."

- ¹⁷ My time is in your hand; *
deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.
- ¹⁸ Show your servant the light of your countenance, *
and save me for your mercy's sake.
- ¹⁹ Let me not be confounded, O LORD, for I have called upon you; *
let the ungodly be put to confusion, and be put to silence in the grave.
- ²⁰ Let the lying lips be put to silence, *
which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully speak against the righteous.
- ²¹ Oh, how plentiful is your goodness, which you have laid up for those who fear you, *
and which you have prepared for those who put their trust in you, even before the children of men!
- ²² You hide them in the secret place of your presence from those who conspire against them; *
you keep them in your refuge from the strife of tongues.
- ²³ Thanks be to the LORD, *
for he has shown me marvellously great kindness in a strong city.
- ²⁴ But when I was afraid, I said in my haste, *
"I am cast out of the sight of your eyes."
- ²⁵ Nevertheless, you heard the voice of my prayer *
when I cried unto you.
- ²⁶ O love the LORD, all you his saints, *
for the LORD preserves those who are faithful, and plenteously repays the proud.
- ²⁷ Be strong, and he shall establish your heart, *
all you that put your trust in the LORD.)

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Acts 6:8-7:2a,51-60

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ¹³ and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." ¹⁵ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

7 And the high priest said, "Are these things so?" ² And Stephen said:

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Deacon: The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. Matthew.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Matthew 23:29-39

²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵ so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶ Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate.

³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Deacon: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

PROPER PREFACE

Christmas

Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; yet without the stain of sin, to cleanse us from all sin.

Sources: The Collect of the Day is taken from the Book of Common Prayer 2019. The Psalm verses are taken from the New Coverdale Psalter of the BCP 2019. Scripture quotations are taken from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.