



ST. STEPHEN'S SPIRIT

The Newsletter of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Wilkinsburg PA

April 2023

Fifteen Reasons Your Soul Needs Gathered Worship, Not Just a Livestream

Article
08.27.2021

Part 3 of a 3-part series (reasons #11-15)

The pandemic continues. Physical attendance in many churches remains sparse—or at least sparser than before. For various reasons, some may need to continue staying home. But other low-risk or fully vaccinated congregants seem to prefer the livestream far longer than we expected.

Amid these various circumstances and uncertainties, we need to lead our people well. Part of that means we need to remind our people of what we lose when we don't physically gather in worship. Below, I've written (my final 5) reflections on all that is lost when we choose to worship from the couch instead of the pew.

11. In corporate worship inside your church, not everything is scripted. You'll greet someone you didn't expect to see. A visitor might sit near you and you'll get the opportunity to welcome them. You might even play a role in leading someone to Christ. From your couch, none of that happens. Everything is scripted. It's nearly impossible to have a fortuitous interaction.

12. When you're in the sanctuary, you can't press mute. You can't pause it to grab another cup of coffee. You can't turn the volume up or down. You're less tempted to pull your phone out and see who just texted you. When you're at church, you're wonderfully captured by the environment. *You are trapped, with other Christians, before God.* That's good.

13. Singing. Perhaps you can hear the congregation sing through your speakers at home, but we all know it's not the same as hearing the real voices all around you. The same goes for reciting Scripture corporately, or reading a confession of sin in unison, even if through masks. There's a necessary artificiality built in when these things are done with just you and your family from your living room. Your fellow members need to hear you sing. You're strengthening them as they hear your voice. It doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune. Whether they know it or not, you're reinforcing their theology with your voice.

14. Sacraments. We lose the opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper if we're home, yet we believe that this is a vital source of spiritual strengthening—not merely a memorial act.

15. Time. The more time goes by, and the more comfortable we get trying to do worship from home, the more "out of shape" we're getting. We're not exercising our corporate worship muscles. The longer we wait, the more normal it will feel for us to do worship from home. For the above reasons, that's less than ideal.

This is not easy for any of us. Let's be patient with each other. Let's love and understand and show grace to each other. But with the requisite safety precautions in place, let's boldly encourage each other to come together for corporate worship.

By Dane Ortlund

[15 Reasons Your Soul Needs Gathered Worship, Not Just a Livestream : 9Marks](https://www.9marks.org/article/15-reasons-your-soul-needs-gathered-worship/)
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Prayer for April

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



BIRTHDAYS

April 25 - Aliya Sunderman

April 29 - Gerry Dalton, Charlie Sprenkel

April 30 - Darlene Malone

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



The Philadelphia Eleven were the first women priests of the Episcopal Church, ordained in 1974.

MORNING PRAYER WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5 AT 10:30 AM. (The first Wednesday of each month.)

Garden Committee Forming

Are you willing to spend a few hours a week weeding and watering a garden area? If so, please contact Gerry Dalton at galton1364@gmail.com



**WANT TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY?
SIGN UP FOR COFFEE HOUR!**

FOOD OF THE MONTH

Tuna and other canned meats



TREES MAKE FOR A HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOOD

Join Wilkinsburg Shade Tree on April 15 from 9 a.m. - 12 noon for spring tree planting on Coal Street. Meet at 500 Block of Coal Street at 9 a.m. There will be refreshments, training and supplies provided.

To RSVP

WilkinsburgShadeTree@gmail.com

Mission of the Month

BROTHER'S BROTHER

Brother's Brother Foundation works to achieve sustainable development across the globe through our mission areas of Healthcare, Infrastructure, Disaster Response, and Education. We support localized programs and provide essential resources to build better futures for all individuals.

See the link below which will lead you to the homepage where you can donate or write a check to "Brother's Brother" and send it to the church. They are doing much for Ukraine, Turkey and Syria.

[Non Profit Organization For World Relief, Health And Education \(brothersbrother.org\)](http://brothersbrother.org)

SACRED GROUND is a film based dialogue about faith and race consisting of eight week sessions that meet once a week. There are sessions at Calvary and other churches that are held at different times and during different months. If you'd like to attend one, please contact the office or find it on the diocesan website. Episcopalpgh.org

WATCH FATHER CHUCK'S PAST SERMONS by accessing our website, "Ststephenswilkinsburg.org;" click "Worship," and then click on "Livestreaming our worship service." A special thanks to Pam Sovich for livestreaming the service each week and maintaining our Facebook page, and to Sig Tragard for maintaining our website!

WHAT ARE YOUR HOLY
WEEK PLANS? PLEASE
JOIN US!!!

APRIL 1 - PALM PREPARATION IN
CHOIR ROOM 11 AM

APRIL 2 - PALM SUNDAY

APRIL 3-8 - HOLY WEEK

APRIL 6 - MAUNDY THURSDAY
SERVICE AT 7 PM

APRIL 7 - GOOD FRIDAY SER-
VICE AT NOON

APRIL 9 - EASTER SUNDAY



FUN TIMES AT ST. STEPHEN'S!



Sunday Worship 8AM & 10:30AM

Contact Us

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