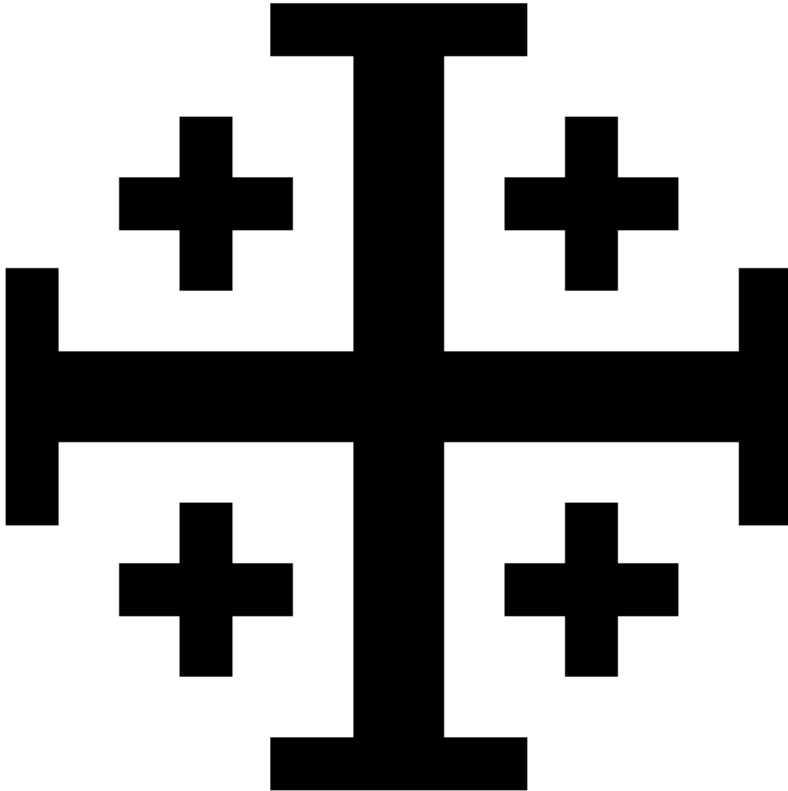


CHRISTIAN FUNERAL FOR JOHN STELLING

May 9, 1939 – January 17, 2026



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
SMITHVILLE, TEXAS

January 30, 2026

11:00 a.m.

PROCESSIONAL

OPENING HYMN

He's Risen, He's Risen

LSB 480



1 He's ris - en, He's ris - en, Christ Je - sus, the Lord;
 2 The foe was tri - um - phant when on Cal - va - ry
 3 But short was their tri - umph; the Sav - ior a - rose,
 4 O, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;
 5 Then sing your ho - san - nas and raise your glad voice;



He o - pened death's pris - on, the in - car - nate, true Word.
 The Lord of cre - a - tion was nailed to the tree.
 And death, hell, and Sa - tan He van - quished, His foes.
 Christ rose, and now o - pen is fair E - den's door.
 Pro - claim the blest tid - ings that all may re - joice.



Break forth, hosts of heav - en, in ju - bi - lant song
 In Sa - tan's do - main did the hosts shout and jeer,
 The con - quer - ing Lord lifts His ban - ner on high;
 For all our trans - gres - sions His blood does a - tone;
 Laud, hon - or, and praise to the Lamb that was slain:



And earth, sea, and moun - tain their prais - es pro - long.
 For Je - sus was slain, whom the e - vil ones fear.
 He lives, yes, He lives, and will nev - er - more die.
 Re - deemed and for - giv - en, we now are His own.
 With Fa - ther and Spir - it He ev - er shall reign.

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

INVOCATION:

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

The casket has been covered with a white funeral pall as a visual representation of the righteousness that Jesus gives to His people in Holy Baptism. This is the reality of the saints in heaven that St. John describes in Revelation 7:14, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

REMEMBRANCE OF BAPTISM

- P** In Holy Baptism John was clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness that covered all his sin. St. Paul says: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"
- C** We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

PSALM 23

- P** ¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
C ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters
P ³He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
C ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
P ⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
C ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
C Glory be to the Father and to the ✠ Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

O God of grace and mercy, we give thanks for Your loving-kindness shown to John and to all Your servants who, having finished their course in faith, now rest from their labors. Grant that we also may be faithful unto death and receive the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Job 19:21-27

- ²¹Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!
²²Why do you, like God, pursue me?
Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?
²³Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
²⁴Oh that with an iron pen and lead
they were engraved in the rock forever!
²⁵For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
²⁶And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,

²⁷whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

My heart faints within me!

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM:

Psalm 121

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

²My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

³He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Solo with Guitar—"On Eagles Wings"

Steve Thorney

EPISTLE READING

Romans 8:31b–39

If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

1. God sent His Son, they called Him Je - sus, He came to love,
 2. How sweet to hold a new - born ba - by, And feel the pride,
 3. And then one day I'll cross the riv - er, I'll fight life's fi -

heal, and for - give; He lived and died to buy my
 - and joy He gives; But great - er still the calm as -
 - nal war with pain; And then as death gives way to

par - don, An emp - ty grave is there to prove my Sav - ior lives.
 sur - ance, This child can face un - cer - tain days be - cause He lives.
 vic - tory, I'll see the lights of glo - ry and I'll know He lives.

Refrain

Be - cause He lives I can face to - mor - row, Be - cause He lives

all fear is gone; Be - cause I know He holds the

fu - ture, And life is worth the liv - ing just be - cause He lives.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 11:17-27

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the eleventh chapter.

¹⁷Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

APOSTLES' CREED

LSB 279

P God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints.
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.

1 Bles-sed as - su - rance, Je - sus is mine! O what a fore - taste of
 2 Per - fect sub - mis - sion, per - fect de - light, vi - sions of rap - ture now
 3 Per - fect sub - mis - sion, all is at rest, I in my Sa - vior am

glo - ry di - vine! Heir of sal - va - tion, pur - chase of God,
 burst on my sight; an - gels des - cen - ding, bring from a - bove
 hap - py and blest, watch - ing and wait - ing, look - ing a - bove,

Refrain

born of his Spi - rit, washed in his blood.
 e - choes of mer - cy, whis - pers of love. This is my sto - ry,
 filled with his good - ness, lost in his love.

this is my song, prais - ing my Sa - vior all the day long; this is my
 sto - ry, this is my song, prais - ing my Sa - vior all the day long.

SERMON “God Is For Us – Who Can Be Against Us?”

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

Stand

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

P Let us pray to the Lord, our God and Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

P Almighty God, You have knit Your chosen people together into one communion in the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Give to Your whole Church in heaven and on earth Your light and peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Grant that all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to newness of life and so pass with Him through the gate of death and the grave to our joyful resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Grant that all who have been nourished by the holy body and blood of Your Son may be raised to immortality and incorruption to be seated with Him at Your heavenly banquet. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Give courage and faith to the bereaved, that within the communion of Your Church they may have strength to meet the days ahead in the assurance of a holy and certain hope and in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those they love who have departed in the faith. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Help us, we pray, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and find comfort in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior of the world, You are the Head of Your Church and the Chief Shepherd of Your flock. In Your wisdom and according to Your gracious will, You have called John, a pastor to your people, out of this earthly life and into Your glorious presence. You give, and You take away.

We thank and praise You for all the blessings and mercy You bestowed on Your departed servant, especially for the years You permitted him to be Your undershepherd and to be a steward of Your mysteries: to preach the saving Gospel in its fullness and purity, to administer the Sacraments according to Your command, to lead the little ones to You, to teach the uninstructed, to comfort those who grieved, to visit the sick, to restore those who fell, to bring back those who wandered, and to proclaim peace and freedom to those held captive by sin.

We praise Your holy name for giving him steadfast faith in times of temptation, for keeping him faithful through trials and hardships, for granting success to Your Word as it was proclaimed through him, for building Your Church in the hearts of many through his ministry, and for granting him a

blessed end, transferring him from the Church on earth to the Church in heaven. We ask You now to comfort all who mourn his death with the sure promises of Your holy Word. Hold them beneath the shelter of Your everlasting arms and heal their wounded hearts.

Help us gratefully to remember all who have spoken the Word of God by remaining faithful to their teaching and by following their example of a godly life, so that when You, the Chief Shepherd, return, we may stand before You without fear. As long as we live, may we live for You; and when we die, may we die in You. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O God of all grace, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to bring life and immortality to light. We give You thanks that by His death He destroyed the power of death and by His resurrection He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Strengthen us in the confidence that because He lives we shall live also, and that neither death nor life nor things present nor things to come will be able to separate us from Your love, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

LSB 280

P Taught by our Lord and trusting in His promises, we are bold to pray:

C 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

NUNC DIMITTIS

LSB 281

P "I am the resurrection and the life," says the Lord. "He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

C (*sung*) Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation
which You have prepared in the sight of every people:
a light to reveal You to the nations
and the glory of Your people Israel.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P "I am the resurrection and the life," says the Lord. "He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

BENEDICAMUS AND BENEDICTION

P Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen.

P Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

P Let us go forth in peace,

C in the name of the Lord. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN:

Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me

LSB 722



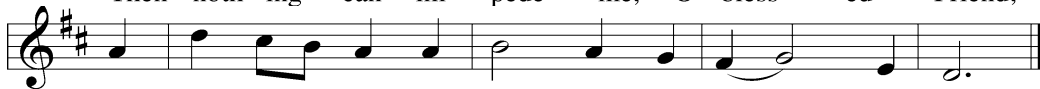
1 Lord, take my hand and lead me Up - on life's way;
2 Lord, when the tem - pest ra - ges, I need not fear,
3 Lord, when the shad - ows length - en And night has come,



Di - rect, pro - tect, and feed me From day to day.
For You, the Rock of A - ges, Are al - ways near.
I know that You will strength - en My steps toward home.



With - out Your grace and fa - vor I go a - stray;
Close by Your side a - bid - ing, I fear no foe,
Then noth - ing can im - pede me, O bless - ed Friend;



So take my hand, O Sav - ior, And lead the way.
For when Your hand is guid - ing, In peace I go.
So take my hand and lead me Un - to the end.

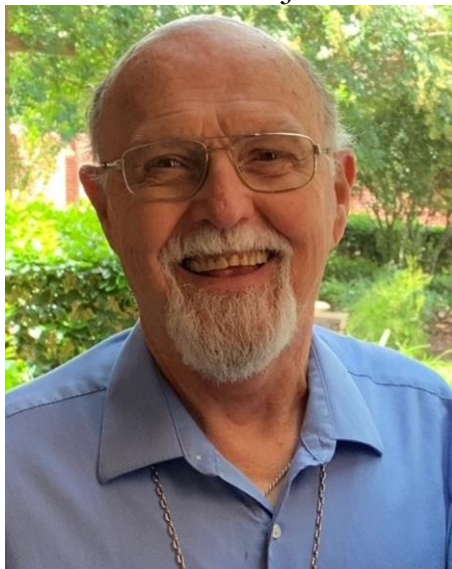
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WORDS OF TRIBUTE

RECESSIONAL

Please join the family for a reception lunch in the Grace Lutheran Church Parish Hall immediately after the service.

OBITUARY FOR REV. JOHN STELLING



Rev. John Frederick Stelling of Austin, Texas, passed away peacefully on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at the age of 86.

John was born on May 9, 1939, at his grandmother's home in Beemer, Nebraska. He was the son of Carl and Frieda Stelling. His father was a Lutheran schoolteacher in nearby Pierce, Nebraska, and John grew up in a home grounded in faith, education, and service.

John attended Concordia High School in Seward, Nebraska, graduating in 1957. A natural leader, he served as class president and was captain of the football team. During these years, he met Kathleen Neben—known to all as Katie—the love of his life. Their friendship grew within a close-knit group of classmates and would blossom into a lifelong partnership.

John continued his education at Concordia Junior College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and then at Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana, graduating in 1961. He went on to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, where he earned his Master of Divinity. While in seminary, John and Katie began dating, and they were married on August 24, 1963.

John's first call to ministry took him overseas as a missionary to the Middle East, based in Beirut, Lebanon. He served as mission coordinator for The Lutheran Hour, a foreign radio ministry of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. John and Katie spent 14 years in the Middle East, raising their three sons while faithfully serving the church. During this time, they lived through two civil wars, including evacuation from Lebanon in 1975, with temporary relocations to Glendale, California, and St. Louis, Missouri. When the conflict subsided in 1977, they returned to Lebanon to continue John's ministry.

In 1979, John left the mission field and moved to Houston, Texas, where he trained as a hospital chaplain at MD Anderson Cancer Center. For 12 years, he provided spiritual care and grief counseling to cancer patients and their families. He later served four additional years as Director of the Chaplaincy Program.

Following his work in hospital ministry, John was called to serve as Senior Pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in the Museum District near downtown Houston. He faithfully led the congregation for eight years before retiring in 2004.

John and Katie retired on the same day and moved from their longtime home in Westbury (Houston) to Bastrop, Texas, to be closer to their grandchildren in Austin. In Bastrop, they found a new church home at Grace Lutheran Church in Smithville, where John remained active in ministry. He volunteered at the church, served in local hospice facilities, ministered to preschool children in La Grange, and worked as a visitation pastor throughout the area.

Above all, John treasured time with his family. He and Katie delighted in attending their grandchildren's swim meets, football games, band recitals, sporting events, and church activities. In 2023, they moved to Longhorn Village Retirement Community in Austin, where they formed new friendships and enjoyed a rich season of community.

John was preceded in death by his parents, Carl and Frieda Stelling; his brother, Charles Stelling; and sister-in-law, Charlotte Stelling.

He is survived by his beloved wife of over 62 years, Kathleen "Katie" Stelling; his sons, Joel Stelling (Christina), André Stelling (Heather), and Cory Stelling; his grandchildren, Austin Stelling (Maddison), Joshua Stelling, Brandon Stelling (Sydney), Ami Stelling, Olivia Stelling, Katie Stelling, and Davis Stelling; his great-granddaughter, Haven Stelling; and his sister, Gretchen Stelling Bradley.

The family extends heartfelt thanks to the nursing staff at Longhorn Village Rehabilitation Center for their compassion and dedicated care during John's final days.



SERVING YOU TODAY

Presiding Minister & Preacher

Organist

Crucifer

Scripture Readers

Pallbearers

Speakers

Rev. Nate Hill

Esther Wolff

Davis Stelling

Austin, Davis, Cory, Brandon, Katie, Christie Stelling

Ami, Olivia, Austin, Brandon, Joshua Stelling

Joel Stelling, Virgil Fry