Bishop: We gather today to mark the release from our parish house debt and we celebrate the relief it brings to our finances and our spirits. The parish house was an incredible vision for St. Stephen’s church, and we celebrated this house when it became a reality. In the meantime, it has become a place of fellowship and ministry for ourselves and for our community. Now we have come to the point where that vision has been paid for in full.

Reader: We thank all who made this miracle possible, for the persons who had the vision, for all who donated and asked for donations to make this Parish House a reality.

Presentation of Bible and Scripture Reading

Bishop: Linda, receive this bible as a token of appreciation from St. Stephen’s, in gratitude for your willingness to engage the larger community in support of the vision of this Church.

(pause)

Bishop: We invite all to listen to the Word of God.

Senior Warden:


What I’m trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don’t be afraid of missing out. You’re my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself.

Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that can’t go bankrupt, a bank in heaven far from bank robbers, safe from embezzlers, a bank you can bank on. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.
Lighting of the Relief Fire

*Bishop:* As the Easter fire enkindles new light at the end of our Lenten Journey, may this fire enkindle relief and lightness of being in our hearts, minds and souls of our congregation and community. *Amen.*

Hymn Joyful, Joyful we adore thee

*Priest:* Let us go on to celebrate in God’s love.

*All:* Thanks be to God

The acolyte leads the people into the church. After all are seated and the bell is rung, the opening hymn will begin.