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Peace, Sun Prairie

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DEDICATION SERVICE

Of New & Additional Facilities

Of PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

1 Peter 1:23 - 2:9

Built for Praise

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

On this dedication Sunday, we rejoice in the Lord for a truly wonderful, amazing building. Today we thank God for all the planning, the hard work and sacrifice that has resulted in this building. Today we dedicate this building to the work of the Lord so that souls loved by Him may grow in His Word and then work to bring the good news of Jesus to many others.

Now if you think the building I'm talking about is the more than 30,000 square foot expansion we dedicate today, you would be half right.

Without in anyway downplaying the blessings of our additional classrooms, worship space, offices, library, kitchen and early childhood center, without downplaying the effort and offerings of God inspired his people to give to this project, without taking away from any of that, the fact is there is a far greater, infinitely more costly and enduring building for us to especially thank God for today.

This other building I'm talking about includes you, and me, and all believer in Jesus on earth and in heaven. That building not made of concrete and wood, but made of souls brought to trust in Jesus. In the words of our lesson: **living stones being built as a spiritual house.** I'm talking about God's Church with a capital C, the one we confess in the creed, the gathering of all who trust in Jesus, God's **chosen and precious Cornerstone.**

And just like the building we dedicate today, God's Church He made us part of is **Built for Praise.**

A year ago, this very week, our congregation and school gathered in this very place. But there was no walls, no windows, no altar, just a field of grass where with the Word of God and prayer we broke ground for this expansion.

But now look around you! What an amazing transformation from a field to a place built for God's praise! What a complete change from what once was! What an amazing testimony to the planning and work of all who supported this building project, and of course the goodness of the Lord from whom all good gifts come.

And yet, that transformation is practically nothing compared to what God did to make us into His **spiritual house of living stones.**

Just as this building did not build itself, so we could not build ourselves into God's church. And we were definitely not a nice level field ready to build. No, we

came into this world as a spiritual wasteland, lost in unbelief and imperfection.

Consider what Peter tells believers transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit to get rid of: **rid yourselves of all evil, all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy and all slander.**

Think how such things come so naturally to our old sinful hearts. Someone else gets the bigger piece of cake, or reaches for the last of the kind of donut we wanted. Someone else is praised for their work, but our hard work goes unnoticed. We see others getting ahead while we're barely squeaking by, and it happens, sinful **jealousy** easily rears its ugly head in our hearts, just one **evil** out of so many before the holy God who requires perfection.

All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like a flower of the field. The grass withers, and the flower falls... Given enough time, even the most mighty human accomplishments crumble and forgotten, even mighty empires and wonders of the

world. Old age and illness make our own bodies wither away like dying grass.

What vivid evidence that the **wages of sin is death**, that we have earned status of a condemned building to be consumed in hell's undying flames.

But then the God who makes something out of nothing stepped in! He who spoke heaven and earth into being spoke His **living and enduring Word** into the wasteland of our hearts and made something new and beautiful!

This new building we dedicate, it took effort and sacrifice—offerings of time and money. What God has built us into took the greatest sacrifice of all: **The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**

The sinless Son of God came to this world to take the sinners' place. Eternal God and yet at the same time our true brother born of Mary, Jesus Christ had no **evil**, no **deceit**, no **jealousy**. His heart and life were

perfectly filled with mercy, truth and kindness. Jesus alone deserved life!

And yet He let Himself be **rejected** by sinful men and nailed to a cross. In your place and mine, Jesus endured the **withering** punishment for our **jealousy** and all other sin. He made the ultimate sacrifice of the sinless life of God.

But when Christ rose from death and forever shattered the power of the grave, God proved Jesus is the **chosen and precious cornerstone**: the most important part of the building, the blessed foundation of His holy Church.

It took men and machines, cranes and power tools to make this building. But it took something far more powerful bring us to Jesus, **the Living Stone**. It took the **living and enduring Word of God preached to you** in your baptism, or when a friend or family member told you about Jesus. By that mighty Word, God the Holy Spirit gave you a brand new birth, creating faith, making you one of God's **chosen**

people, a living stone whose spiritual and eternal life comes from Christ alone.

Through Jesus, you will **certainly not be put to shame!** Your sin is forgiven. You are part of a **holy priesthood**, people with full access to God, for through faith you are dressed in the priestly garments of Jesus' sinless life and precious blood.

Built on Jesus, resting on His saving work, you are part of God's glorious church, **a spiritual house** one that will last as long as the promises of God: **the word of the Lord endures forever.** Because of Jesus, we will not wither and die as our sin deserves, but we will share in God's own endless life and peace, paid for by Jesus.

What a marvelous change! From a grass covered field to a beautiful building with an important purpose. Go through this building and you will see it is **Built for Praise.** And by **praise** I don't just mean prayers and singing hymns, but what our lesson says: **proclaim the praises of Him...** that tell about the good news of Jesus, the only Savior from sin.

Now this worship space is clearly **Built for Praise:** where Christ coming to His people through Bible, Baptism and the Lord's Supper stands at the front and center of all we do here. Refreshed by His forgiveness, renewed in Jesus' Word we are ready to return to our daily lives to **proclaim** his **praises** in both word and action.

But this is also true of our early childhood wing. On the walls of Grow in Peace Learning Center you will see reminders of the Savior Jesus as the Good Shepherd who loves and saves His little lambs. Through Bible time and the songs of praise they learn to sing, in Grow in Peace, those little ones get to hear the saving voice of Christ the Good Shepherd.

You can literally hear the praise our elementary school program is built for as the children sing at the end of the service just as you've already heard the Junior choir. But it is also heard as day after day faithful teachers **proclaim** the **living Word of God** to build the students up in faith and ready them to share their faith with others.

Even the kitchen is built for praise as we remember that praising God is not limited to weekly worship or school chapel, but includes everything God's people do in faith and love for Jesus, just as the Bible says: **whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**

Yes, a grassy field to a marvelous building with a marvelous purpose. As you thank God for that today, remember also how as He has done something even more amazing for you! The Lord **called you out of darkness into the marvelous light** of Christ, **so that you may proclaim the praises of him!** He took us from sin and death and has given us faith and life in Christ, making His **holy people** able serve and honor the God who made us His very own.

And that is a good thing. Though the construction of this building is done, the work of building God's church of believers is not. There are still people in our community and our world who don't know the

Savior, souls the the Lord will build into His Church through His Word shared by Peace's ministries.

Therefore as we dedicate this new facility today, let us also rededicate ourselves to **proclaiming the praise** of Jesus to others through the work we do together to share His Word. Let us do so, for by God's great mercy, He has **built us for praise**. Amen.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. Amen.