



Saint Luke Lutheran Church

1807 Field Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55116 | 651-698-9443 | saintlukechurch.org

January 2026 Newsletter



The Pastor's Perspective

Pr. Bristol Reading

Theophany: God becomes visible

In January, the church observes two festivals in close succession: Epiphany and Baptism of Our Lord. Epiphany always falls on January 6, twelve days after Christmas, which is a Tuesday this year. Baptism of Our Lord always falls on the first Sunday following Epiphany, which is January 11 this year. These two festivals are chronologically close together, but to me, they have always seemed an odd pair. Let me tell you more about each of them.

On Epiphany, we read the story of the wise men/magi coming from the East to find the child Jesus in Bethlehem and honor him as a king for all people. We will have a 6 pm service at St. Luke that evening during which we offer blessings for the church building and worship space as we welcome a new year. This is one of my favorite worship services of the whole year (there's cake and stars!), so you should join us if you can. The theme of Epiphany centers around light.

We will observe Baptism of Our Lord during our regular Sunday morning worship on January 11. We'll read the story of Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan River, when the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove and the voice of God declares him his beloved son. We'll also remember the gift of our own baptisms that call us into the lifelong journey of faith. The theme of Baptism of Our Lord centers around water and new life.

January Volunteers

Thanks for your participation!

ONLINE USHERS

1st Sunday: David Tews

2nd Sunday: Sue McNeill

3rd Sunday: Raulie Ruiz

4th Sunday: David NedreLOW

IN PERSON USHERS

First and Second Sundays:

Volker Landenberger

Aidan Tarpenning

Third and Fourth Sundays:

Mike and Nancy Hegdahl

READERS

4 Laurie Herrmann

11 Julie Ellingson

18 Kay Reich

25 Wendy Bjorklund

COMM. ASSTS.

4 Doug Klein

11 Christine Olson

18 Kay Reich

25 Wendy Bjorklund

ALTAR GUILD

Joyce Bluel, Christine Olson

COUNTERS

4 Katy Eggert

11 Julie Gaarder

18 Wendy Bjorklund

25 Carol Hornung

I mentioned that I have always found the liturgical calendar's pairing of these two moments, the adoration of the magi and the baptism of Jesus, a bit odd. But Christians who lived closer to the time of Jesus thought they were very much connected! We know that as early as the second century, Christians actually celebrated them simultaneously as revelations of Jesus' divine power and authority. Sometimes a third moment was also celebrated alongside them: Jesus' miraculous transformation of water into wine at the Cana wedding.

I learned recently that the combined commemoration of all these events on January 6 even predates the celebration of Christmas on December 25. The early Christian church would gather to celebrate on a single day the whole arc of events that reveal Jesus as the embodiment of divine presence: the nativity, the visitation of the magi, the baptism of Christ, and the wedding of Cana. All these were celebrated together as "theophany," which is a word for the manifestation or appearance of God in our world. Only later were they separated into different days in the liturgical calendar.

So this year, I'm hoping to think about Baptism of Our Lord a little differently, remembering that it is deeply connected to Epiphany. Water and light together! I've been appreciating the following liturgical text, written by Sophronius of Jerusalem, a seventh century Patriarch. In it, he brings together the symbolism of light that is so prominent on Epiphany *and* the symbolism of water that is so prominent on Baptism of Our Lord (and, as a bonus, it describes Jesus' victory over sin as crushing the heads of dragons). Both of these holy days point to the good news of Jesus: in Christ, the full power of God has come to set us free from sin and death. Thanks be to God!

"Today the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon the waters; today there shines the Sun that never sets, and the world is sparkling with the light of the Lord; today, the moon shines upon the world with the brightness of its rays; today the glittering stars adorn the universe with the radiance of their twinkling; today the clouds from heaven shed upon humankind a shower of justice... today, through the presence of the Lord, the waters of the Jordan River are changed into remedies; today the whole universe is refreshed with mystical streams; today paradise has been opened to humankind, and the Sun of righteousness has shone upon us... today we are delivered from the ancient mourning, and, like a new Israel, we are saved; today we escape from darkness and, through the light of the knowledge of God, we are illumined; today the darkness of the world vanishes with the appearing of our God; today the whole creation is brightened from on high; today errors are canceled, and a way of salvation is prepared for us by the coming of the Lord... today, the Lord comes to be baptized, so that

COFFEE HOSTS

- 4 Christine Olson
Laurie Herrmann
- 11 Elise and Jakob Kamp
Julie Ellingson
- 18 Jo and Doug Klein
Kay Reich
- 25 Robyn Rongstad
Nancy and Mike Hegdahl



Bun Run

Many thanks to our Bun Run volunteers for January: Mike and Nancy Hegdahl, Volker Landenberger, Ken McGrew, Doug Klein, Kay Reich.

January Birthdays

- 9 Laurie Herrmann
- 16 Nancy Hegdahl
- 29 Norma Alexander
- 30 Sue McNeill
- 31 Kim McNamara



Notes from the Music Director - Becca Ruiz

I want to give a big thank you to all the choirs for brightening our services with their talents this month! The kids did such a good job on December 21st, the adult choir and bell choirs were amazing as always. It's a lot of work and it paid off - thank you!

Choirs will resume January 18th, with vocal choir starting a little later at 11:15am

humankind may be lifted up... today we have acquired the kingdom of heaven: for the Lord's kingdom shall have no end...

You have come to save us. We acknowledge your grace. We proclaim your mercy, and we do not conceal your gracious acts. You have set humankind free; by Your birth you have sanctified the virgin's womb; And since your manifestation all creation praises you. For you, O our God, have appeared on earth and have dwelt among humanity. You sanctified the waters of the Jordan by sending down your Holy Spirit from heaven, and you have crushed the heads of the dragons who lurk there."

-- from the Theophany Prayer by Sophronius of Jerusalem

Bible Study All are welcome to our weekly Bible Study, in person or online, on Wednesdays at 10am led by Pastor Bristol. We will discuss the scriptures for the forthcoming Sunday. The Zoom link is emailed to you every Monday. Join us!



Happy new year to you all! I am humbled to be beginning the new year as the church council president and look forward to partnering with you all throughout the course of the year. I've had a positive experience on the church council over the past year and I'm glad to continue to serve with my fellow council members. We have a wonderful group of dedicated leaders who support the church, community around us, and one another, there's much to be proud of. As we look forward to the new year, please connect with me and know that I want to hear from you. May 2026 bring much light and joy to you and your families. Take care, Emily Elfritz

It is time for Undie Sunday! It's that time of the year again! The dropping temperatures make us think of those less fortunate who are experiencing homelessness, unemployment or underemployment. Providing the basic needs of socks and underwear is our mission. The biggest need right now is mens and womens underwear in the large-XXL size range! On Jan. 4, Debby and Stew Shepard will be providing a Mission Message during worship to provide an update on the status and current needs of The Drawer. Financial donations can be made out to The Drawer or to St. Luke with The Drawer in the memo area. Also, we will be

On January 18th, we will also have a Lent/Easter Music Preview from 10:45-11:15am. Bring your treats to the choir seats and we'll talk about music for the upcoming season!

Holiday Gifts for Homeless Youth Drive Thank you to everyone who participated in this drive through gifts of money and/or physical contributions. You gave \$245 in gift cards, towel sets, fleece items, socks, hats and mittens, dolls for the kids, and much more. In addition to the gifts I delivered, a check for \$643 (from November jar donations and member contributions) was mailed to Lutheran Social Service for the drive. These gifts all made a difference in the lives of homeless youth in the East Metro. I am humbled by how generous this congregation is. Thank you so much! -Wendy Bjorklund



All are invited to Game Day at St. Luke, Friday, January 2 and 16. Bring a snack to share and your favorite game and settle down to an afternoon of fun...join us!



Epiphany Worship Epiphany is Tuesday, January 6, 2026. We will hold a family-friendly 6 pm

collecting donations in our offering jar for The Drawer. So, for the month of January, let's fill The Drawer! Collection Start: Jan. 4 – Undie Sunday: Jan. 25. For more info, visit www.thedrawer.org.

Connect, Grow and Serve

worship service at St. Luke. Epiphany completes the Christmas story by focusing on the arrival of the Wise Men who have followed the star to find young Jesus. On this day, we bless our worship space and look with hope toward the new year. Rumor has it we also get to share a homemade king cake, so don't miss this special event!

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