

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH and ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Our Mission: Learn God's Truth, Share Spirit's Healing, Follow Jesus' Ways.
Second Sunday of Christmas ~ Ancient Feast of the Epiphany

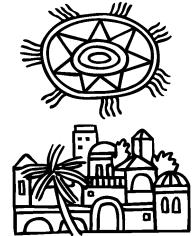
January 4, 2026, Virtual Prayer and Preaching

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**The CHURCH'S GATHERING**

**CONFESSiON and FORGIVENESS**

We gather together with the holy Trinity,  
one God, Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty Savior, ✨ Prince of Peace. **Amen**



Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, we confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.* Reconciling God,

**we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair.  
We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for  
your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us;  
we have not always embraced your message of peace.**

**We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear.  
We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our  
participation in violent systems that harm your innocent ones; our  
reluctance to embody your good news.**

**Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of your  
salvation. Amen**

God's grace upon grace flows over you. Christ's presence ✨ redeems the  
whole creation. Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!

**Alleluia and Amen!**

**GREETING and PRAYER of the DAY**

The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God  
sent from heaven above, is with you all. **And also with you.**

Almighty God, Leader of the Heavenly Hosts, **hear our prayer.** *A brief  
silence.* Everlasting God, the radiance of all faithful people, you brought the  
nations to the brightness of your rising. Fill the world with your glory, and  
show yourself to all the world through him who is the true light and the  
bright morning star, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

**GOD'S WORD**

**READING: Matthew 2:1-12 Common English Bible**

This is Good News for all nations, as the Word was given to Matthew,  
chapter 2.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the  
rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked,

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,

    by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
    because from you will come one who governs,  
        who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

This is God's Word and our life.

### **READING: Colossians 2:9-13, 3:10-14**

*Contemporary English Version*

This is a reading to the Colossians, in chapters 2 & 3.

God lives fully in Christ. And you are fully grown because you belong to Christ, who is over every power and authority. Christ has also taken away your selfish desires, just as circumcision removes flesh from the body. And when you were baptized, it was the same as being buried with Christ. Then you were raised to life because you had faith in the power of God, who raised Christ from death. You were dead, because you were sinful and were not God's people. But God let Christ make you alive, when he forgave all our sins.

Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand God better. It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, or if you are circumcised or not. You may even be in the lower class or among the cruel peoples, and you may be a slave or a free person. Yet Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together. This is God's Word and our life.

**READING: John 2:1-10** *Contemporary English Version*

This is the Good News of the New Wine we receive at the Table of the Lord, as the Word was given to John, chapter 2.

Three days later Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding feast in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited and were there.

When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, "They don't have any more wine."

Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come! You must not tell me what to do."

Mary then said to the servants, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."

At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about 100 liters. Jesus told the servants to fill them to the top with water. Then after the jars had been filled, he said, "Now take some water and give it to the man in charge of the feast."

The servants did as Jesus told them, and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over and said, "The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have kept the best until last!" This is God's Word, our hope.

**HOLY GOSPEL: John 1:1-5, 9-14**

P: This is the Holy Gospel as the Word was given to John, chapter 1.

**We give glory to you, O Lord.**

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him. What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of all; and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had come into being through him, and the world did not recognize him. He came to his own and his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believed in his name who were born not from human stock or human desire or human will but from God's self. The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the Good News of Christ's Victory.

**HYMN of the DAY: # 300 "The First Noel"**

- 1 The first Noel the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
- 2 They looked up and saw a star  
shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night.  
Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
- 3 And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went.  
Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
- 4 This star drew near to the northwest,  
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay.  
Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
- 5 Then entered in those wise men three,  
full rev'rently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.  
Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

Text: English traditional

**MESSAGE:**      ***PRESENCE***      *silence for reflection follows*

**The CHURCH PRAYS**

**PRAYERS of the PEOPLE**

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

Repairer of the breach, you separate us from our sin and unite us with one another. Heal the animosity in our hearts, and bind us together in love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Author of life, you sent your spirit over the waters, your breath into your children, and guiding stars across the sky. Awaken us to the plight of the planet and send us to care for your creation. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Light that leads the way, you make yourself known to the nations. Illuminate just paths and guide leaders in the church and the world in your holy will. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Proclaimer of promises, you raise up prophets and messengers in the places we least expect. Equip us to listen well to those who bring both good news and painful truths. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Voice of the silenced, you cast the mighty from their thrones and fill the hungry with good things. Grant those in need the courage to demand equality and those with abundance the wisdom to share. Respond to any who call out in need this day.

**P:** We especially pray for John, Greg, Lori, Mary Lue, Lynn, Linda, Will, Bea, Ruth, Bud, our at-home worshippers, ... Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Redeemer of the saints, you gift us with many people throughout our lives who point the way to you. We give you thanks for the recently departed and all who have loved us. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Blessing God's holy name, we pray as Jesus taught us.

**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**

### **PRAYER for MISSION**

Holy God, hear our prayer. *A brief silence.* Incarnate God, you are among us in this gathering. May we treasure the gifts you so freely offer and ponder in

our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

**Amen**

**\*BLESSING and PEACE**

The Holy One fill you with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child. **Amen**

The angels declare: "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
**and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"**

The peace of Christ is always with you. **And also with you.**

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***Today's Sponsorships***

*Today's Worship Folders are Given to the Glory of God*

In Loving Memory of parents,  
Rev. and Mrs. Alvin Matz  
and Rev. and Mrs. Henry Dohmeier.  
Given by Jerry Dohmeier.

Attendance for Sunday, December 28, 2025: 36

### ***Learning, Serving, and Fellowship Opportunities***

**Christmas Holiday Closing: The church office and St. Peter's Elementary School will reopen on Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Poinsettias:** Thank you to everyone who sponsored poinsettias to decorate our altar! Plants remaining after January 4<sup>th</sup> will be given to a good home. Please initial the "pick-up" paper on the lectern when you take your plants.

**Christmas Card Boxes:** Christmas Card boxes are located in the back of the church. Place cards to your church friends in the boxes under the first letter of the recipient's last name. Don't forget to check for cards sent to you! If you see cards addressed to an at-home worshipper, consider taking the card/s to him/her. Please also consider donating any money you saved on postage to a church mission. Boxes will be removed after 1/11.

**Prayer Boxes:** While the prayer group will not continue to meet (at this time), we will continue to collect prayers for Sunday worship, and to pray for our school families and staff. If you would like to submit a prayer request, please use the prayer jar in the school lobby or the basket in the church lobby.

**2026 Offering Envelopes are available in the Narthex.**

**Epiphany Day Celebration:** Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). Come and celebrate the arrival of the Magi with worship and lite meal following.

**PACE Movie Night:** Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. in the fellowship hall. All are welcome!

**LGBTQIA+ Friends and Allies Pot Luck:** Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). All are welcome to the parlor for the potluck to bring LGBTQIA+ friends and allies together to get to know each other. Fried chicken provided, bring a side dish or dessert. Reservations are not needed, but you can RSVP to Mary Catherine Day at 443-743-4717.

**Beginning January, 2026:** To sponsor bulletins or flowers contact the church office. Payment for sponsorships should be included with your offering (not a separate payment), and put in the offering plate or mailed to the church, Attn: Finance.

**Sponsorships Available:** Altar flowers for 10:15 am. worship on 1/18, and bulletins on 1/11 (contact the church office).

**St. Peter's Family Goods Center:** If you are interested in volunteering for the Family Goods Center, please contact Bill Lauer. This is a great opportunity for service hours for your middle or high school student, and volunteer hours for SPES families. Please place donations in the shopping cart in the Narthex.

**On-line Giving:** As an alternate way of submitting your offering, you can make donations on-line through PayPal! Login to your PayPal account and search for our tag: @Spl367 or St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Christian Day School.

***News from St. Peter's Elementary School and PACE***

Open enrollment for the 2026-27 school year begins on January 5th! Contact the office at 410-665-4521 if you have questions or want to schedule a tour. Referrals are always welcome!