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## Following the Word



One of our neighbors has a Nativity Scene in front of their house. As I write this on the evening of December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Jesus hasn't made an appearance just yet. Mary and Joseph are there, looking longingly at the empty manger, waiting particularly impatiently for the birth of the Christ Child. I don't know if Jesus will make His appearance in that Nativity Scene on the 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> but every time I drive by, I check it out.

Some people put all the figurines of the Nativity out at the same time - sometimes even before Thanksgiving. Other people wait until Christmas Eve or Day to put Jesus in the manger. Those that pay close attention to the Biblical timeline make sure that the Magi - the Wise Men - travel in from the East, following the star, until they finally arrive at the Nativity Scene on the Day of Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>. Epiphany is the day that the Church celebrates the arrival of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, and Jesus' first miracle of changing water into wine. All of these events celebrate the revelation of Jesus to the world.

Take a moment to reread *Matthew 2:1-12*. The Wise Men came to Jerusalem, following the light of a miraculous star. They were looking for "He who has been born king of the Jews." It makes sense that they showed up in Jerusalem, since that is where King Herod lived. So, Herod gathered the chief priests and the scribes - the religious leaders of the day - to figure out where the Christ was supposed to be born. They came across these words from *Micah 5:2*,

*"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

So, the Wise Men travel the handful of miles to the town of Bethlehem, following the star. They found Jesus there, in the City of David, and they worshipped Him. They brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They were full of joy as "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy!"

There is an important point that we often overlook when we think of the Wise Men following the light of that star to worship Jesus: It was not the star alone that brought them to Bethlehem. It was also the Word of God. Somehow, in that far off land to the East, they knew that the Christ was coming, and they were looking for a star to lead them to Him. That got them as far as Jerusalem, but it was ultimately the Word of Micah that brought them to the Baby Jesus.

God gives us His Word, which reveals His saving work of bringing us salvation. His Word shows us who Jesus is and what Jesus does for us to redeem us from our sins. Jesus suffers all - even death - to take away our sins. As we celebrate this Christmas and Epiphany Season, spend time in God's Word. Read the Bible. Read how God's gracious acts bring us to the Infant Jesus lying in the manger, the 12-year-old boy Jesus in the temple (*Luke 2:41-52*), the miracles He performed and the Words He proclaimed, and ultimately to the cross and empty tomb.

God's blessings to you as you celebrate the birth of our Savior, and His revelation to the World!

*Pastor Jonathan Schultz*

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## **FEBRUARY LAMPLIGHTER DEADLINE**

*Please have your calendar items and articles into the church office by:*

**Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup>!!**

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## **WEE DISCIPLES**



*<sup>9</sup>When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. <sup>11</sup>And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Matthew 2:9-12*



Thank you to everyone who attended the Wee Disciples' Family Christmas Chapel and Celebration on December 18<sup>th</sup>. The children always enjoy sharing their music and Bible verses with family and friends.

Wee Disciples will celebrate Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Epiphany is the last day of Christmas—the day we celebrate the Wise Men finally finding Jesus and presenting Him with gifts.

God continues to bless us with almost full enrollment at Wee Disciples. We do have a couple of openings in our 2–3-year-old class. Thank you to the many families who entrust the care and nurturing of their little ones to us!

We will continue throughout 2026 with our *Burgers for Benefits* at Fuddruckers' on the third Tuesday of every month. Our next fundraising evening will be on January 20 from 5 to 9. Also, the Smith's Rewards is an ongoing fundraiser for Wee Disciples. For more information about either of these fundraising opportunities, check the Wee Disciples' announcement board by the church office for more details. Thank you for your continued support with these fundraisers!

The new church year began on Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, when we started the season of Advent, leading up to Christmas, and the secular new year begins now on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Have a happy and blessed new year! Wee Disciples will be closed on Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Board of Early Childhood Education will meet on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30pm in the Stahlecker Room.

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Did you know that Trinity has scholarships available for families of Trinity who have, or would like to have, their children attending Wee Disciples Preschool and Day Care? The application is available on our website ([www.trinity-mt.org](http://www.trinity-mt.org)) or in the church office. **NOTE ~ The congregation is encouraged to contribute to the scholarship fund just as we do the roof repair or any other special fund. There are special envelopes in the back of the Sanctuary to place your donations in.**

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### LWML News

*All ladies of the congregation, including our new members and confirmed young women, are invited and encouraged to attend all LWML happenings here at Trinity.  
Please contact Sylvia Adams or Amy Schultz for more information.*



**Thank you, Thank you** to those who attended and helped with the Advent Brunch and Cookie Walk! We had a delightful time at the Advent Brunch as we heard the Christmas story with some 21<sup>st</sup> century application. And we are so thankful for your generosity during the Cookie Walk! Half of the proceeds will go to *Family Promise* here in Great Falls, and the rest will help us support a variety of missions in 2026. **Join us Sat, January 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 am** to help us choose those missions, and for time spent in God's Word and fellowship.

Save the Date - Our **District LWML Convention will be April 24-26 in Lewistown.** Come join us! See Sylvia or Amy for more information.

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**Sewing and quilters needed!** Our LWML will be donating a baby quilt on behalf of our congregation at our District Convention in April. We want this to be a group effort and are looking for people to donate fabric, cut squares and even help sew the quilt top together. We are hoping to tie the quilt in February - more info about that to come later. Please contact Sylvia Adams for more details (406) 781-3911.

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Our next **LWML Group Gathering** will be **Saturday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**. We will finalize our budget - which means we get to vote on which Mission Projects we will support in 2026! What a joyful time it is to make plans to support church workers here and abroad, help our neighbors in need, share Jesus' love with kids at camp and through military chaplains... there are so many possibilities! Ladies - come help us plan for the outreach of the Gospel on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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**Wednesday Ladies Bible study** ~ **Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:00am** in the Stahlecker Room. All the ladies of the congregation are invited and encouraged to attend.

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**Men's Bible Study** meets on **Thursday mornings at 8:30 am** for an hour of fellowship and study of God's Word. All the men of the congregation are invited and encouraged to attend.

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Happy 2026! May this be the beginning of a spiritually enriching year for you with plenty of time for the means of God's grace, word and sacrament at our wonderful worship services.

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**The Friday Ladies Bible study** ~ Friday Ladies Bible study continues to be in recess until further notice.

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**Assisted Living Ministry** ~ Assisted Living Ministry will begin the new year with hymn singing and a devotion at *Highgate Senior Living*, 3000 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. S., on Friday, **January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1:30pm**. Prior to this event a no-host lunch will gather at **11:30am at El Comedor, 1120 25<sup>th</sup> St. S.** Let your warm 2026 New Year's greeting be part of this enriching ministry.

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**Fellowship Time Help Needed!!** We are looking for individuals or couples who would be willing to help set up the coffee and cookies for Sunday mornings. This would be one or two Saturdays a month (the more people who volunteer the less often you would be asked to help). If you are interested, please talk to Pastor (406-402-2081) or Cheryl (406-452-2121).

**We are also looking for individuals, couples, families or groups** who would be willing to help with the tear down and clean-up follow Fellowship time each Sunday. If you are interested, please talk to Pastor (406-402-2081) or Cheryl (406-452-2121).

**A/V Help** ~ Our video ministry goes out each week on our Facebook page and reaches countless people. **The audio/video crew is looking for a few good people to help with this very important ministry. No experience is needed; we will teach you what you will need to know.** If you would be interested in helping, contact Pastor (406-402-2081) or Cheryl (406-452-2121) for more information.

**Snow Removal Sign-up** ~ Help is needed for the winter to remove snow from the sidewalks before church on Sunday mornings. If you would be willing to help, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside the church office.



### **COMPARISON OF GIVING REPORT ~ 2025**

**For the period November 27<sup>th</sup> through December 21<sup>st</sup>**



<b>November 27<sup>th</sup></b> ( <i>Thanksgiving</i> )	\$995
<b>November 30<sup>th</sup></b>	\$3,422
<b>November 30<sup>th</sup></b> ( <i>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Missions</i> )	\$910
<b>December 7<sup>th</sup></b>	\$6,851
<b>December 14<sup>th</sup></b>	\$3,945
<b>December 21<sup>st</sup></b>	\$3,826
<b>Vanco</b>	\$1,800

**Actual giving for report period: \$20,839**

Roof Repair Fund –through 12/21/2025 \$50,374

If you have any questions, please call me at (406) 781-7605 ~ *Logan Stene, Bookkeeper*

**Vanco's Give+ Online**

**Vanco's Give+ Mobile**

*The next generation of giving*

Please visit our website **[www.trinity-mt.org](http://www.trinity-mt.org)**, go to the “Fellowship” tab and sign up for online giving. You can also download the Vanco mobile app to your smart phone for even more convenience.



**A Reminder to Use Your New Offering Envelopes** ~ New boxes of offering envelopes for **2026 (BUFF in color)** were issued Wednesday, December 17, 2025. The last time to use the 2025 green envelopes was December 31, 2025!

**Please destroy any remaining 2025 green offering envelopes after December 31, 2025.**

**Begin using the BUFF colored offering envelopes SUNDAY, January 4, 2026.**

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**Offering Counters are needed** to assist the Treasurer and Bookkeeper in counting and recording the offerings following each Sunday service. No experience is needed. Please call the church office (452-2121) or sign up on the bulletin board outside the church office if you are willing to assist with this necessary mission.

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### **Our shut-ins**

**Mildred Birkholz** (The Lodge), **Ellen Carpenter** (Eagle's Manor), **Anita Erickson** (at home), **Ed Hickel** (at home), **Arleen Nelson** (Rosetta Assisted Living), **Lauretta Stanfield** (at home); **Barbara Zafft** (The Lodge)

**Bob Blomstrom** (Helena), **Darlene Murray** (at son's home in Kansas)

### **Our members who continue to battle health issues and their caregivers**

Roy & Carolyn Arves, Chuck & Judy Lively, Jerry & Colleen Mans, Henry & Alice Schuman

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### **We pray for those serving in the military and our First Responders**

**Sam Birkett**, Cascade County Sheriff's Deputy; **Matt Clark**, Great Falls Emergency Services; **Joshua Graham**, (Blomstrom's grandson-in-law) Helena Police Department

**Scott Backus**, MANG; **Scott Broberg**, USAF; **Ricardo Dominguez**, USAF; **Matthew Erickson**, USAF (Anita Erickson's grandson); **Landon Grosenick**, MANG (Pam Grosenick's grandson); **Chaplain Jonathan Schultz**, USAF Reserves

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### **We pray for our Montana District missionaries...**

**Rev. Dr. David & Jennifer Preus** ~ Eurasia (Romania)

**John & Jenn Wolf** ~ Kenya

**Rev. Dr. Gerald & Heidi Paul** ~ Cayman Islands

**Rev. Eric & Johanna Stinnett** ~ Ethiopia

**Giving Online:** You can partner with the LCMS by making an online gift restricted in use to the support of these missionaries at [lcms.org](http://lcms.org)

**Giving by Check:** You can also make a donation to their ministries by check. *Mail your check, made payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and designated in the memo line with the missionaries last name*, to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861, **QUESTIONS?** Call 888-930-4438 or send an email to [mission.giving@lcms.org](mailto:mission.giving@lcms.org).

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## **2026-2027 Church Officers**

<b>Church Council President</b>	James Neumann
<b>Vice President/Head Elder</b>	Martin Bauer
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Cheryl Bauer
<b>Treasurer</b>	vacant
<b>Board of Elders</b>	Martin Bauer, Scott Broberg, Len Koelbel Shawn Shaw, Bill Sybrant, Ron VanVoast
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	Morgan Emmett, Don Lee
<b>Missions &amp; Evangelism</b>	Roy Arves, OD Jones, Len Koelbel
<b>Stewardship</b>	OD Jones
<b>Board of Youth</b>	Sam Birkett, Alyssa Birkett
<b>Board of Early Childhood Education</b>	Myrna Philipp
<b>Board of Education</b>	vacant
<b>LWML President</b>	Sylvia Adams

## Membership Changes in 2025

### Births

Gwendolyn Michelle Taylor (daughter of Mychal & Ericka Taylor)	05/12/2025
Daniel Christian Neumann (son of Christian & Stephanie Neumann)	06/19/2025
Ada Caroline Harr (daughter of William & Grace Harr)	12/04/2025
Holly Marie Young (daughter of Mathea (Mattie ) Young	12/12/2025

### Baptisms ~ Children

Bohdi Lee Bishop	05/25/2025
Gwendolyn Michelle Taylor	07/06/2025
Daniel Christian Neumann	12/07/2025
Holly Marie Young	12/28/2025

### Baptisms ~ Adult

Jacob Vance Russell	06/22/2025
Jessica Margaret Brookie	10/05/2025

### Confirmations ~ Adult

Jessica Margaret Brookie	10/05/2025
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### Confirmations ~ Youth

Harper Rae Lautenschlager	05/11/2025
Caitee Jean Miesmer	05/11/2025
Tracy Lou Miesmer	05/11/2025
Alex Martin Shabaan	05/11/2025
Meredith Rose Tabbert	05/11/2025
Leif Archer Tanksley	05/11/2025

### Deaths

Charles John Lorenz	July 30, 1930	04/19/2025
Purl (George) Pence	March 21, 1933	07/15/2025
Violet Lillian (Haase) Nell	February 15, 1931	09/10/2025
Juanita Irene (Kinzel) Winter	March 24, 1933	10/28/2025
Jon Schroeder	February 20, 1967	11/26/2025

### Peaceful Release

Brian Flynn ~ Hazel Ingrid Flynn	03/05/2025
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### Transfers In

Cory & Lori Sivumaki ~ Aaliyah & Colt	02/21/2025
Scott & Deanna Backus ~ Brianna, Brooke & Brice	06/24/2025
Ethan Egan	11/07/2025
Matthew Kade	11/17/2025

### Transfers Out

Sandra Hanford	to Peace Lutheran, Great Falls, MT	03/05/2025
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# JANUARY 2026

## Serving this Month

*Altar Guild* ~ Denise Wegner / Sandy Baranko / Candace Tanksley

*Ushers* ~ Alan Wegner / Roy Arves / Elders

### **January 4, 2026 ~ Second Sunday after Christmas (white)**

Duty Elders	Martin Bauer / Len Koelbel
Audio/Video/Music	Denise Rutledge
Fellowship Set-up ~ Alyssa Birkett	Fellowship Clean-up ~ Judy Boyce

### **January 7, 2026 ~ The Epiphany of Our Lord Mid-Week Service**

Duty Elder	Martin Bauer
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### **January 11, 2026 ~ The Baptism of Our Lord (white)**

Duty Elders	Shawn Shaw / Bill Sybrant
Audio/Video	Isaac Schultz
Organist	Gloria Creek
Fellowship Set-up ~ Jessica Brookie	Fellowship Clean-up ~ Alice Schuman

### **January 14, 2026 ~ Mid-Week Service**

Duty Elder	Ron VanVoast
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### **January 18, 2026 ~ Second Sunday after the Epiphany (green)**

Duty Elders	Scott Broberg / Len Koelbel
Audio/Video/Music	Cheryl Bauer
Fellowship Set-up ~ Jessica Brookie	Fellowship Clean-up ~ Elsie Lorenz

### **January 21, 2026 ~ The Confession of St. Peter Mid-Week Service**

Duty Elders	Shawn Shaw
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### **January 25, 2026 ~ Third Sunday after the Epiphany (green)**

Duty Elders	Shawn Shaw / Bill Sybrant
Audio/Video/Music	Denise Rutledge
Fellowship Set-up ~ Jessica Brookie	Fellowship Clean-up ~ Sandra Baranko

### **January 28, 2026 ~ The Conversion of St. Paul Mid-Week Service**

Duty Elders	Ron VanVoast
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## ***Birthdays and Wedding, Baptismal and Confirmation Anniversaries***

January 1<sup>st</sup>

Harper Lautenschlager

January 4<sup>th</sup>

Alex Shabaan

January 5<sup>th</sup>

Sheldon Burkstrand

Bill Sybrant

January 9<sup>th</sup>

Marlyn Gersack

January 10<sup>th</sup>

**Anita Erickson (80+)**

January 12<sup>th</sup>

Kathleen Redenbaugh

Clarissa Shaffer

January 13<sup>th</sup>

Gerda Broberg

Joseph Nommensen



January 15<sup>th</sup>

Sandra Baranko

January 19<sup>th</sup>

Lucy Hall

January 20<sup>th</sup>

Martin Bauer

Anita Chapman

**Chuck Lively (80+)**

January 21<sup>st</sup>

Hayden Houle

Blaize Wegner

Seth Wheeler

Sam Chapman

James Neumann

Lauralyn Fairbanks

January 26<sup>th</sup>

January 29<sup>th</sup>

January 1<sup>st</sup>

James ♥ Ashlee Graves (18)

January 2<sup>nd</sup>

Gary ♥ Mary Somerfeld (44)

January 24<sup>th</sup>

Mason ♥ Courtney Walker (23)

January 25<sup>th</sup>

Mel ♥ Ruby Willey (53)



January 1<sup>st</sup>

Mike Grams, Debbie Lee

Randi Meehan, Joy Suek

Sherri VanVleet

January 3<sup>rd</sup>

Penny Hill

Courtney Schroeder

January 4<sup>th</sup>

Shayna Kellogg

January 5<sup>th</sup>

Dennis Philipp

January 8<sup>th</sup>

Sean Ginnaty

January 10<sup>th</sup>

Emily Stene

January 13<sup>th</sup>

Harper Lautenschlager

Axton & Parker Mansch, Serenity Miesmer



January 14<sup>th</sup>

Ed VanVleet

January 15<sup>th</sup>

Baylie Isakson

BlaykLinn Isakson

January 17<sup>th</sup>

Jon Chapman

Samarah Hill

Gerda Broberg

Kolter Legg

Ada Burkstrand

January 19<sup>th</sup>

January 22<sup>nd</sup>

January 24<sup>th</sup>

January 25<sup>th</sup>

January 26<sup>th</sup>

January 30<sup>th</sup>

Aaron Neumann, Pam Nommensen

Alex Shabaan



January 1<sup>st</sup>

Arlene Andersen, Wendy Doll, Mike Grams

Alice Schuman, Henry Schuman, Joy Suek

January 14<sup>th</sup>

Chris Legg

January 15<sup>th</sup>

Baylie Isakson, JC Isakson

January 18<sup>th</sup>

Jamie Wheeler, Seth Wheeler

January 19<sup>th</sup>

Scott Backus

January 27<sup>th</sup>

Tonya Wandke

January 28<sup>th</sup>

Sean Ginnaty