



# ***St. Timothy Tidings***

## ***January, 2026***

**From the Pastor**



Happy New Year!

In Germany, we wished one another “einen guten Rutsch,” “a good slide” into the new year. The wish is for a frictionless transition, a smooth glide from old to new, that the new year would touch easily and gently against its predecessor and we’d just step on in and carry on, leaving the former year behind us. This slide happens regardless of how we feel about it. The clock ticks over. Between one inhalation and the next, a new year begins. But it’s not so easy to leave the past in the past.

One exercise we’ve played with in Grief Group is a “Me Equation.” It’s a listing of all the people who have shaped us, with little addition signs (+) in between their names. At the end of the page, we write an equal sign (=) and then our name.

I’m carrying lots of beloveds with me into 2026. Lots of people who have had a hand in shaping me. Beautiful, wonderful, complicated sinner-saints who’ve taught me about God, relationships, the world, hope, tenacity, and how to be human. Kathy, June, Dean, Johnny, Carol, George, Sandy. So many more. Bert is now also part of my equation.

One of my favorite things about Epiphany is that it is a reminder to local Christian communities that all nations come to see the Christ child. And one of my favorite parts of holy communion is that we step outside of time and are joined with all of God’s children across time and space around God’s banquet table. This year, on the first Sunday of 2026, we celebrate all peoples gathering around God-who-loves-us-enough-to-become-us. We’ll all gather around the manger, and around the table. All of God’s beloved will gather with us, too. As God draws near to us, Holy Spirit empowers us to draw near to Christ. And there, around the Messiah, all God’s children are united again.

That’s a good way to slide into the new year.

Pastor Amanda



## From Our Music Director

*"Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music." - Martin Luther*

### A Better Beginning

**Souls Anthem (It Is Well) (arr. Tori Kelly, Kirk Franklin)**

**<https://youtu.be/xlzFBzdXEcl?si=RZvFAKrTIQNpzj3n>**

Teach me how to love You  
Show me how to trust You  
More than with my words or with a song  
No, it's not been easy  
To live life down on my knees  
But with faith I know I'll carry on

There is more to see than with my eyes  
But fear sometimes can leave me paralyzed  
I realize that I'm not in control  
Yet it is well with my soul

The enemy's against me  
Arrows all around me  
Never knew the fight would last so long  
In seasons of depression  
I plead for Your protection  
Make me right, I'm tired of being wrong

Every time there's hope, it seems to die  
And the voices all around me feed that lie  
Everything I see tells me to let go  
Yet it is well with my soul  
It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul  
It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
Oh, it is well, it is well with my soul

Soul, my soul, whoa, my soul  
With my soul, my soul, whoa, it is well with my soul  
With my soul, my soul, whoa, my soul, whoa

This fight I'm in is not of flesh and blood  
The weapons that I need are in Your love  
Lord, don't You ever let me go  
You make it well with my soul

It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with  
Soul, my soul, whoa, my soul

When I was younger, I loved the idea of new beginnings. There was something especially satisfying about the clean slate that came with certain moments of the year—the first day of school, the last day of school, my birthday, and New Year’s Day. Each one felt like a marker saying: “You can start over here”.

New Year’s Day, in particular, has existed as a cultural symbol of transformation. “New year, new me” is more than a phrase—it’s an expectation. The calendar flips, and suddenly it feels like we’ve been given permission to grow, to change, to become better versions of ourselves. Psychologically, it makes sense. A new year feels like a fresh opportunity.

But as I’ve gotten older, I’ve noticed a pattern in myself when it comes to New Year’s resolutions.

Most of the big, long-term goals I set don’t actually happen (I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve promised myself that this would be the year I read X number of books). The goals I tend to meet are the small, short-term ones. And if I’m honest, when I wait until the calendar flips to make a change, it’s usually a sign that I wasn’t very prepared to make that change in the first place.

Over time, I’ve realized something important: changing habits doesn’t work if the systems aren’t in place to support them. Sometimes it’s not the habit itself that needs to change, but the system behind it.

This truth applies deeply to our spiritual lives.

Psalms 46 reminds us where real stability comes from. It opens by declaring that God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. The psalm paints a picture of chaos—earth giving way, mountains falling into the sea, nations in uproar—and then God speaks a simple but powerful invitation: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

The greatest growth and most important changes in our lives don’t happen unless the system of our relationship with Jesus is strong. Centering ourselves in Christ is not just another goal to add to the list—it is the foundation that allows real change to take place.

We often say things like, “This year I want a stronger relationship with God.” That’s a good desire, but it’s also a big, long-term goal. And big goals are hard to reach without smaller, faithful steps that support them.

Instead of only aiming for the outcome, we can focus on building the system. That might look like praying once a day with a spouse, partner, or close friend. It might mean committing to attend church weekly, even when life feels busy. It could be as simple as writing down one way you noticed God at work in your day—whether it was an answered prayer or a quiet moment of peace when you needed it most.

As you try these practices, don’t do them alone. Look for someone who can walk with you, someone who shares the same desire to grow. Systems are stronger when we are surrounded by people who encourage us and help keep us centered on Christ.

Whether you’re someone who loves the idea of a New Year reset or someone who has been working toward change for a while, my prayer is this: that the system of your faith would be strengthened. That as you learn to be still before God, you would find that centering yourself in Jesus truly is the catalyst for the growth and change you’re seeking.

Alex Domeier, Directory of Music Ministry



## Upcoming Events



### Sunshine Girls Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study will resume on January 20, 2026. The class continues the study of Matthew. Please join us on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 10 a.m. in the Community Room. No preparation is required. It helps to read the Bible chapter to be discussed. Most people buy an informative text Matthew for Everyone Part 2 by N. T. Wright. Join this group for lively and sometimes humorous discussion as we relate Jesus's words to our daily lives. Come as you are. No dress up here.

### Bluebirds Meet Monthly

The BLUEBIRDS meet monthly on the second Tuesday of the month. Everyone is invited to join us! Watch the bulletin for information on where we will be meeting each month!



### MONTHLY POTLUCK

We have a Monthly Potluck in Founders Hall after the Sunday morning worship service! Please join with your fellow congregants after worship on **Sunday, January 11th** to enjoy fun, food and fellowship.

## Annual Congregational Business Meeting

**Sunday, January 25th**

immediately following the 10:30 service

Please plan to attend!



**Congregational Meeting**



**Don't forget to review St. Timothy Lutheran Church on Google!**

It's a proven fact that organizations with five or more reviews get seen much more frequently on Google!

Use this link: <https://g.page/r/CWZC8v0DAfGREBM/review>



### Our beautiful altar!

Thank you to Teresa Gravelle, Pat Kirkpatrick, Janet Eisenmenger, Randy Lassiter, Marilyn Elbert, Sue Petersen, Brandt Martinek and Ginny Gauerke for making our church look so festive!



A nice surprise, Girl Scout Troop 2389 filled up our Blessing Box! They are going around to the list of blessing boxes and filling them.

## Our Eventful December



What a wonderful Christmas Choir Concert we had on the evening of December 14th!

Special thanks to the choir members who worked so hard to present this, and very special thanks to Music Director Alex Domeier for planning, rehearsing and making this event happen!



Thank you to all who helped with the Ladies Christmas Dinner, especially to the MOST for all of their hard work. A huge thank you to Melanie Ortman & Janet Ortman for all of their hard work in making this year a success. The food, fellowship & fun was a great start to this Advent season.

**We at St. Timothy's are SO BLESSED and we are very grateful for our wonderful parishioners and friends!**

## Advent Journey of the 'Wise Guys' Has Been a Delight!



The Wise Guys are lining up for one last pit stop before starting their journey...



The Wise Guys are checking out the weather as the journey begins. Looks cold and drizzly out there!



The Wise Guys, never one to pass up an opportunity, have infiltrated the Ladies of St. Timothy Christmas Dinner and are eagerly perusing the menu.



The Wise Guys huff and puff up their first hill. Shorty is taking a breather. All want to know where they left their camels.



The Wise Guys are scouting gift ideas for that mysterious baby...



After searching low and high, the pastor found the missing Wise Guys in jail and begging for bail money. The crime? Sampling the Altar Guild's sacramental wine.



The Wise Guys betook themselves to the Cry Room and found some friends to comfort them after the pastor abandoned them in the nave for two whole days.



The Wise Guys take some time to review safety procedures and resources, especially given their hearts' unhappiness with the last hill they climbed.



The Wise Guys decide to try their hand at conducting the Christmas concert, uninvited. The Director was Not Amused.



The Wise Guys, inspired by the St. Timothy choir's Christmas concert, decide to try their hand at a walk-and-singalong. Faint strands of " Follow the labyrinth road " can be heard drifting across the yard.

**Many thanks to whomever has been helping them on their journey!**

## **HELP WANTED: Nursery Volunteers**

The nursery needs you to help care for our youngest during Faith Formation and/or Worship Service. Nursery serves an important place in the congregation. Not only does it introduce our infants and toddlers to the life of the church, it provides a respite for parents to worship without distraction. If you love children and would be willing to volunteer a day every two to three months, please see Laureen Greathouse, or call at 615-339-7284. The process is easy! A background check and quick safe-church online training will get you ready for service.



## **Christmas Dinner Kits**

The Outreach Committee would like to thank all who donated Christmas Dinner kits to help our neighbors in need in the community. Your kindness and generosity has made a difference!

To our church family at St. Timothy...words cannot express how your loving support has carried us through the difficult days of November and December! The sudden loss of Nancy's oldest son, and her subsequent fall and resulting concussion, have made significant changes in our lives. Pr. Amanda has been a constant source of strength. And without your prayers and offers of help, we could not have gotten through. But God is good, and y'all have stood by us. We pray His blessings for you in the New Year. Hope to see you in church soon!

Love and prayers,  
Lee and Nancy



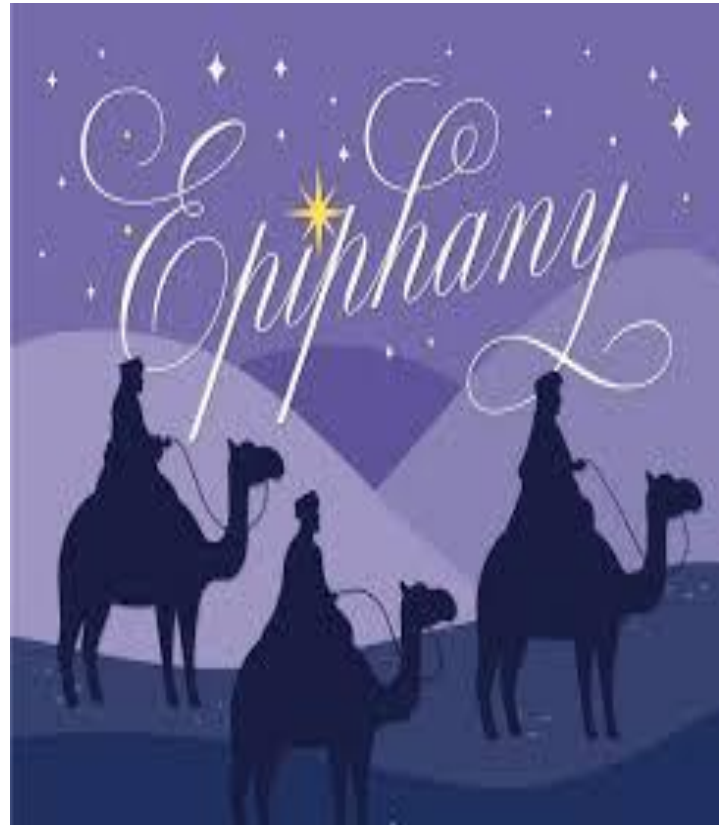
## **Christmas Candlelight Service**





# January 2026 Meetings

Date	Committee	Time	Location	Notes
Wed Jan 7	Outreach	7:00 - 8:00 pm	Zoom	Contact Melissa House for more information
Thurs Jan 8	Property	7:00 - 8:00 pm	Community Room	For more information contact Baker Kirkpatrick
Tue Jan 13	Learning	6:30 - 7:30 pm	Community Room	For more information, contact Melissa Chowning.
Thurs Jan 15	Stewardship/ Finance	7:00 - 8:00 pm	Zoom	Contact David Miley for more information
Thurs Jan 22	Executive Committee	6:00 - 6:30 pm	Community Room	For more information, contact Ken Tsuchiyama
Thurs Jan 22	Congregational Council	6:30 -7:30 pm	Community Room	For more information, contact Ken Tsuchiyama
Mon Jan 26	Youth	7:00 - 8:00 pm	Zoom	Contact Melissa Chowning for more information
Tue Jan 27	Worship & Music	7:00 - 8:00 pm	Library	Contact Alex Domeier for more information



# Council Corner

## **Welcoming New Leadership**

At our final meeting of the year, we were pleased to welcome our incoming council members, Bob Unfried, Rich Farlik and Brad Jones, as guests. Their visit offered them a chance to get the proverbial “lay of the land” before officially beginning their terms.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to Ken Tsuchiyama, Laureen Greathouse and Jennifer Howard for their faithful service on Council over the past two years. Their leadership and guidance have been invaluable to our community.

## **From Pr. Amanda**

Pr. Amanda shared updates on the many activities taking place during this meaningful and busy Advent season:

### ***Accessibility Task Force***

The Task Force has begun its’ work, focusing on:

Worship access

Participation for those with disabilities

Strengthening our environment of welcome for newcomers and those on the margins

### ***Recent Worship & Program Updates***

Transitioned the 4:00pm Saturday service to a 1:30pm Sunday service

Rebooted the German Advent Service

Offered the first of three planned midweek online Advent devotionals

### ***Seasonal Worship Services***

**Longest Night/Blue Christmas** was held on December 21 at 1:30pm offering space for reflection, comfort and quiet hope

### ***Christmas Eve Services Offered***

**4:00pm** - ABC’s of Christmas, a child-centered celebration

**8:00pm** - Traditional Christmas Eve Worship

## **From the President’s Report**

Council President Ken Tsuchiyama shared encouraging updates:

**Our Place Catering** - Our ongoing partnership continues to generate positive revenue for the parish

**A Building Full of Life.** Throughout the week, our facilities host

Bridge Club

Two Scouting troops

AA Meetings

Rotary Club

PFLAG

Committee Meetings

Choir Rehearsals

Worship Services

The steady activity reflects the vibrancy and hospitality of our parish community.

### Save the Dates

**January 11 - Monthly Parish Potluck.** Join us for food, fellowship and community connection at our Monthly Parish Potluck on January 11. Bring a dish to share - or simply bring yourself! All are welcome at the table.

**January 25 - Congregational Meeting.** We will gather to elect 2 representatives to attend the Southeastern Synod Assembly (May 28-30, 2026 in Columbus, GA); and vote on the acceptance of the Annual Reports. If you are a voting member interested in serving as a delegate, please speak to Pr. Amanda

### A Closing Word

As we look forward to a new year of ministry, service and shared mission, we remember the apostle Paul's encouragement to the early church in his letters: that we are called to stand firm in faith, persevere in doing good, encourage one another, and let our lives overflow with the love and grace we have received in Christ. His message reminds us that discipleship is never a solitary journey - we are strengthened by the Spirit and by the community God has gathered around us. May we continue to walk faithfully together, growing in hope, service, and joyful witness.

Your Congregation Council

## Congregation Council

### Terms Expire 2026



**Dave Miley**



**Jen Yamin**



**Lyndsay Salvador**



**Sarah Mariott**

### Terms Expire 2027



**Melanie Ortman**



**Brad Jones**



**Rich Farlik**



**Bob Unfried**

# Resources

*Here are a few resources to help guide you as you continue your faith journey!*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

<https://elca.org/>

Southeastern Synod ELCA

<https://www.elca-ses.org/>

Reconciling Works

<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>

Living Lutheran Magazine

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/>

ELCA Daily Bible Readings

<https://elca.org/Faith/DailyBible/>

Luther Seminary God Pause Daily Devotion

<https://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/>



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To make a donation on our website, click the QR code to the left or scan it with your phone. We give thanks for all those gifts that help us further the glory of God's kingdom in a world in need.



The Tidings, the newsletter of St. Timothy Lutheran Church, is published monthly. Articles, story ideas, and comments can be emailed to [sttimtidings@gmail.com](mailto:sttimtidings@gmail.com). Deadline for the February 2026 issue is January 25th. Please [contact the church office](#) with any questions.



*A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)*

650 E. Main Street  
Hendersonville, TN 37075  
Phone: 615-824-6244  
Office email: [info@sttimothyhendersonville.org](mailto:info@sttimothyhendersonville.org)  
Website: [www.sttimothyhendersonville.org](http://www.sttimothyhendersonville.org)

The Rev. Amanda Spangler, Pastor  
Alex Domeier, Director of Music Ministries  
Gretchen Person, Accompanist  
Nancy Krieg, Church Administrative Assistant  
The Rev. Paul Frank, Pastor Emeritus