



The Messenger

January 2026

**St. Paul's
Evangelical
Lutheran
Church**

3295 S. Union Ave.
Alliance, Ohio 44601
330-823-2285

FROM PASTOR MUSE

"You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter." — Psalm 74:17

January arrives with a quiet kind of courage. The rush of December has settled, the lights begin to dim, and the world around us slows into a season that many would rather hurry through. Winter is not everyone's favorite chapter—but Scripture reminds us that it, too, is a season shaped by God's hands. "You made summer and winter," the psalmist says. God not only allows the cold months; God purposes them.

In the church, we resist the temptation to divide life into "holy" and "ordinary" times. God is present in all seasons—yes, even in these gray, frosty days when the world feels dormant and our spirits sometimes feel the same. Winter is not a spiritual interruption. It is an invitation.

Winter teaches a rhythm that the rest of the year often drowns out. The earth rests. Trees conserve energy. Animals burrow deep. The created world honors limits that we often refuse to acknowledge in ourselves.

Many of us enter January exhausted—physically, emotionally, spiritually. Winter offers a sacred slowdown, a reminder that rest is not a sign of weakness but a reflection of God's design. Martin Luther often spoke of the Christian

life as one lived in continual dependence on God's grace rather than on our own striving. Winter whispers the same truth: You do not hold the world together—God does. And God invites you to rest in that promise.

Spiritual "wintering" is not giving up; it is leaning in. It allows ourselves the space to be honest about our limitations, our weariness, and our hope for renewal. Winter becomes a teacher of trust.

· Wintering means acknowledging what lies dormant. Not everything in life blooms at once. Some hopes, dreams, or healing processes rest beneath the soil unseen. But unseen does not mean abandoned. The Spirit is at work even when our growth is not visible.

· Wintering means making room for silence. In a noisy world, the quiet of January can feel unsettling. Yet silence is one of God's most tender tools. It is in stillness that we often hear the nudging of the Holy Spirit most clearly. This month, allow yourself small moments of pause—breathing, praying, simply existing before God.

· Wintering means remembering God's promise of renewal. The cold months are not the end of the story. They are preparation for what comes next. Even in the depths of winter,

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*God is present
in all seasons.*

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daylight slowly grows. The seeds beneath the frozen ground hold the promise of spring. So too, God is preparing renewal in our lives, our families, our congregation.

Jesus meets us in every season, but winter reveals something particular about God's character. Our God is not distant or indifferent. Christ comes close—into the cold stables of our lives, into the quiet corners of our grief or uncertainty, into the spaces where warmth feels far away.

Lutherans hold tightly to the incarnation: God with us in the flesh, in real places, in real seasons. This means God is not only the maker of winter, but also our companion through it. When days feel shorter and burdens feel heavier, our Emmanuel—God-with-us—steps into the season beside us, guiding, sustaining, and lifting us with grace that does not freeze over.

As you enter this new year, I invite you to “winter with

God”:

- Let your soul breathe.
- Let your pace slow.
- Let your heart listen.
- Let the promises of Christ warm what feels cold or uncertain in your life.

The same God who sets the boundaries of creation also sets the boundaries of your days—and fills them with mercy that is new every morning, even every frosty morning. Winter may not sparkle like summer, but it carries its own quiet beauty and its own sacred gifts.

May this January be a time of gentle renewal for you. May you discover God's closeness in the stillness, God's comfort in the cold, and God's steadfast love in every step of the journey ahead.

Soli deo Gloria, Pastor Muse

FROM PASTOR THOMPSON

Who we meet on the Journey.

On entering the house, [the Magi] saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. (Matthew 2:11)

In the story of the Magi, they meet King Herod and his advisors, as well as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They also encounter an angel. I am sure they met many others on their journey from the east. They were on a mission to meet the new king.

The journey of the Magi is similar to the journey we all make as disciples of Jesus. We are all on a mission to make Jesus known to others. We may be sent to a particular place to do our work, but we will meet many people along the way. What are we sharing about our work, on behalf of Jesus? Are we telling others about the mission Jesus has sent us on? Are we ignoring those we meet along the way?

We know that the Magi met with King Herod and were open about their mission. I want to believe that they told others along the way. Imagine that at every place they

stopped, or others who encountered them on the roads were told, “We are seeking a new king!” “We have seen the signs in the stars that he is the Messiah!”

Where is God sending you? How are you sharing your story of Jesus with those you encounter? Even if we don't know exactly where our journey is leading, we are still working on behalf of Jesus. Keep seeing the people that you encounter and share your story.

You never know when God is placing you in the path of someone who needs to hear about salvation. You never know when God is putting someone in your path to encourage and support you in faith.

May your new year be filled with joy for the journey, courage to share your faith, and strength to go where God sends you. Amen

Peace, Pastor Diana

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Our theme for 2025-2026 School year

“Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them.”

Psalms 111:2

As we start the new year, it is a great time to commit to learning about faith. Join our education program. We have classes for all ages, so we invite you to come out and grow in faith. If you would like to participate in the teaching team, please see Pastor Muse.

Bible Study gathers on Wednesdays at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM. All are welcome to join.

“Christ in our home” devotional books are available on the table in Barnes Hall.

If you would like to receive the Daily Devotional email sign up through the web-site or contact the pastor for assistance.

The youth group meets every Wednesday. We gather at 5:30 PM for a meal and conclude at 7:00 PM. Our leaders are Pastor Muse, Pastor Thompson, Diana Cullen and Jill Mehl.

Our Library continues to grow and expand. Take the opportunity to visit our collection and see if there is something that speaks to you.

HEALING EVENT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20 AT 7:00 PM.

A healing event will be held on Tuesday, January 20th at 7:00 PM. This event will include a sound bath, meditation, Reiki, Hot stones, deep heat, Light therapy, Red Light, and other avenues of healing. All are welcome to attend, and no experience is needed.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregational Meeting will be Sunday, January 25th following worship. All reports are due to the church office by December 31st.

MUSIC & WORSHIP

Music & Worship Committee will not meet in January. Committee members should contact Gina Falconer if they have something that needs discussed before the next scheduled meeting.

We will be taking down the decorations from the Advent and Christmas season on Tuesday, January 6 at 6:30 PM. Please come out and help put away the decorations as we transition into Epiphany. Many hands make light work!

There will be no choir practices on Thursday, December 25, January 1 or January 8. Chancel Choir will resume rehearsals on Thursday, January 15, 2026 and Joybells will resume on Thursday, January 29, 2026 at their normal times.

SOUP AND SALAD LUNCHEON

Join us after the Sunday, January 25 Congregational Meeting for a Soup and Salad Luncheon. Soups and beverages will be provided. Please bring your favorite salad or dessert to share. Warm up by the fire and enjoy some soup, salad and fellowship.

Apostle Build 2025

We have been invited into the 2025—2026 Apostle Build program. This is a unique opportunity for the church to partner with Habitat for Humanity to help provide a house for a family. We are blessed to be one of ten churches in this process. We invite you support in this program. There are three ways you can support this work.

1) Prayer. As you come before God in prayer, lift up this program that it will have success. 2) Volunteer. This program involves an investment of time. Either working on the site at the house or making lunch for a work day. More information will be brought forward in the spring. 3) Financial donation. We do have a financial investment in this program and would welcome any support and participation from the community. You can make a direct donation through the offering plate, there will be a change collection container in Garnes Hall and there will be an ornament tree in the welcome center through the month of January. Please consider a donation, even in a small way to this incredible project.

Thank you to all who helped or participated in Breakfast with Santa. We collected 129 food items and \$167.00 for the Food Pantry.

God's Blessings
Josh and Gina Falconer

*The Eternal Flame is given to the glory of God
in celebration of our 26th wedding
anniversary
by Pastor Tim and Pastor Diana.*



ALTAR FLOWER NEWS

We have been notified by DeHoff's of an increase in the cost of altar flowers. It has been four years since the base prices have increased. Beginning January 1, 2026 the total cost for both vases per Sunday will be \$82.00. This is the base price and special requests can be honored but will be at an additional cost.

When asked if you're interested in altar flowers for a particular date you've had in the past or you choose an open date and don't feel you want to pay for both vases, let Cathy Brookes know and she will try to find another person to share the altar flowers for that Sunday. The cost then would be \$41.00 for each person.

Happy January Birthday to You!

May you enjoy many more and may God bless each one of you in many ways as you enjoy another year in God's grace.

3 - Brian Huffman
4 - Jane Holbrook
4 - Ericka Linger
4 - Lauren Siegfried
5 - Linda Baker
7 - Michael Anne Swain
8 - Nicole Marschinke
11 - Joseph Caner
11 - Madelyn Bailey
12 - Stacey Russell

16 - Diane Green
16 - Ben White
17 - Derek Dimit
17 - Bonnie Mohr
19 - Tom Siegfried, Jr.
19 - Jarrod Webb
19 - Brandon Hunt
21 - Karen Rice
21 - Ed Stockli
22 - Erik Bergmann

23 - Korie Ziemke
25 - Jeff Wallace
25 - Toni George
25 - Jon Hunt
26 - Shirley Kline
26 - Elaine Schroeder
27 - Dr. Mark Hostettler
27 - Susan Molnar
28 - Haley Stravaggi
30 - Diana Cullen

31 - Amy Carver



Sunday, January 4, 2026

Introduction

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Readings and Psalms

Jeremiah 31:7-14 *Joy at the gathering of God's scattered flock*

Sirach 24:1-12 (alternate) *Wisdom lives among God's people*

Psalms 147:12-20 *Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. (Ps. 147:12)*

Wisdom 10:15-21 (alternate) *We sing, O Lord, to your holy name. (Ws. 10:20)* **Ephesians 1:3-14** *The will of God made known in Christ* **John 1:[1-9] 10-18** *God with us: the incarnation of the Word*

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Introduction

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

Prayer of the Day

O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm **Isaiah 42:1-9** *The servant of the LORD brings justice*

Psalms 29 *The voice of the LORD is upon the waters. (Ps. 29:3)* **Acts 10:34-43** *Jesus' ministry after his baptism* **Matthew 3:13-17** *Revelation of Christ as God's servant*

Sunday, January 18, 2026

Introduction

Today's gospel opens with further reflection on Jesus' baptism. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one anointed by the Spirit. In the liturgy we come and see Christ revealed among us in word and meal. We go forth to invite others to come and worship the Holy One and to receive the gifts of grace and peace made known among us.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, our strength and our redeemer, by your Spirit hold us forever, that through your grace we may worship you and faithfully serve you, follow you and joyfully find you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Readings and Psalm

Isaiah 49:1-7 *The servant brings light to the nations*

Psalms 40:1-11 *I love to do your will, O my God. (Ps. 40:8)*

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul's greeting to the church at Corinth **John 1:29-42** *Revelation of Christ as the Lamb of God*

Sunday, January 25, 2026

Introduction

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God's grace and mercy.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Isaiah 9:1-4 *Light shines for those in darkness*

Psalms 27:1, 4-9 *The LORD is my light and my salvation. (Ps. 27:1)* **1 Corinthians 1:10-18**

Appeal for unity in the gospel **Matthew 4:12-23** *Revelation of Christ as a prophet*

January 2026						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Happy New Year Church office closed	2 7:00 pm Euchre and Dominoes	3
4 All Saints Sunday 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education	5 7:00 pm Grief Support	6 5:00 pm Catechism 6:30 pm undecorate 7:00 pm Committee Meetings	7 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	8	9 12:00 pm Deborah's	10
11 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education	12	13 5:00 pm Catechism 7:00 pm Church Council	14 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	15 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	16	17 8:30 am Men's Breakfast
18 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Christian Education Newsletter Items Due	19 7:00 pm Grief Support Church office closed	20 5:00 pm Catechism 7:00 pm Healing Event	21 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	22 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	23	24
25 9:30 am Worship (in-person and online) 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Congregational Meeting Soup/salad Luncheon	26	27 5:00 pm Catechism 5:00 PM Community Dinner	28 10:00 am Bible Study 12:00 pm Midweek Eucharist (in-person and online) 5:30 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Bible Study	29 6:15 pm Joy Bells 7:15 pm Chancel Choir	30	31

FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

FELLOWSHIP

Coffee Hour hosts:

2026 is quickly approaching. Garnes Hall was quite busy hosting an ongoing number of activities in 2025 and hopefully we will do the same in 2026. It is wonderful to be able to have a facility that can accommodate our church family for brunches, dinners, suppers and other gatherings throughout the year. As the new year progresses we will keep you informed when opportunities arise to get a chance to gather and enjoy time together. Also, thanks to all of you who are always willing to volunteer to help with coffee hour every Sunday and any other time you are asked to contribute whatever the request may be.

MID-WEEK EUCHARIST

Join us for a time of prayer, word and Holy Communion. The service begins at noon and lasts about twenty-five minutes.

EUCHRE AND DOMINOS

Euchre, Friday, January 2, at 7:00 PM and will continue on the first Friday of each month thereafter.

YOUTH GROUP

Youth meets every Wednesday at 5:30 PM. We have a meal, fellowship, lesson and games. All youth of the church 1st grade and up are invited to join. Contact Pastor Muse, Diana Cullen or Jill Mehl.

ADULT EDUCATION

Bible Study Wednesday at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

The Deborah's will meet Friday, January 9 at 12:00 PM.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Men's breakfast will be Saturday, January 17 at 8:30 AM. All men of the church are welcome to join this time of fellowship and growth. We conclude at 10:00AM. Please note the date change.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our last mission of 2025 was gathering items for the "Mitten Tree". We gathered over 168 items and delivered all to the Salvation Army along with the 240 food items gathered at the "Breakfast With Santa" event.

January 27, 2026 we will begin a new year of providing a hot meal for the Alliance community on the 4th Tuesday of each month at Christ United Methodist Church, 470 E. Broadway St. in downtown Alliance.

We have been involved in this outreach project for over 20 years. It is a great opportunity to interact with those less fortunate in our community. Those in attendance always express their thanks for the meal served. We are always looking for volunteers who are willing to help.

In 2025 we lost some folks on the team who prepares, serves and cleans up. If you have the time, please consider being a part of this opportunity. Talk with Greg Brookes to learn what it's all about.

Also, as information becomes available about upcoming projects in the new year, we will share that with the congregation. We gather many, many items that are distributed to the community throughout the year to the schools, Salvation Army, etc. Our congregation is always very giving. Thank you for your generosity.

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

3295 S. Union Ave
Alliance, OH 44601

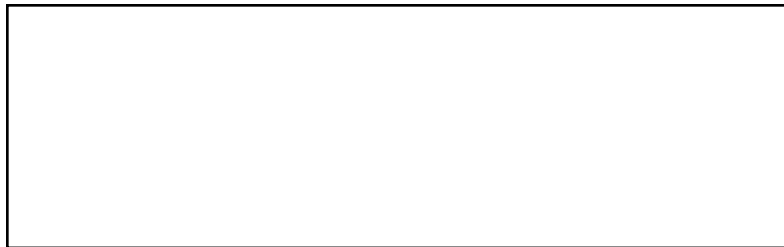
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be the living body
of Jesus Christ!*



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The Reverend Timothy H. Muse - Lead Pastor
The Reverend Diana Thompson - Administrative Pastor
Rhonda Ferrall - Secretary
Kathy Sloan - Organist

Gina M. Falconer - Director of Music
Gayle B. Fiegenschuh - Communion Minister and Visitation



**ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY
18TH.**

**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING WILL BE SUNDAY,
JANUARY 25TH FOLLOWING
WORSHIP. ALL REPORTS ARE
DUE TO THE CHURCH OFFICE
BY DECEMBER 31ST.**

