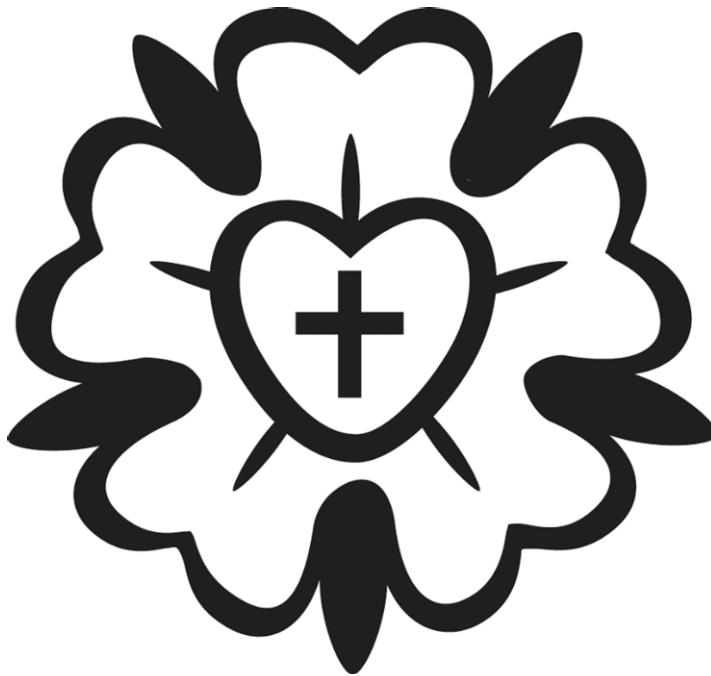


*CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS  
WITH REFLECTIONS FROM  
MARTIN LUTHER  
DECEMBER 28, 2025  
8:30 AM*



Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Reinholds, Pennsylvania

## WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT SWAMP LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Guests** are welcome and invited to make themselves at home. If you're interested in learning more about Swamp Lutheran, have questions, or are looking for a church home, speak with Pastor Scott or church members. Please complete a visitor card and place it in the offering plate or sign guest register in narthex.

**Restrooms** are located off the narthex (lobby) by the coat rack.

The worship service is printed in this bulletin. **Hymns** are found in the red hymnal Evangelical Lutheran Worship. **Children's** active presence is welcomed in our worship. There are special kids bulletins available in the narthex and at the side entrance.

**Offering plates** are passed. Additionally, there is an offering drop box in the narthex. Online giving via cell phone is easy and secure. Just use this QR code from your phone's camera app.



**Our worship** is rooted in the ancient pattern of the church—gathering, word, meal, sending. The shape of this liturgy and much of the actual words/prayers come directly from scripture. Though we make seasonal shifts, the constancy of our worship reflects God's constant love and promises through forgiveness, scripture, and the sacraments of baptism and communion. Following this liturgical pattern, as well as the Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year cycle of scripture readings, connects us through our worship with Christians around the world and throughout time.

All baptized Christians are welcome to receive **Holy Communion**. We believe "Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us to eat and drink." (Small Catechism, Martin Luther) Children who do not yet receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

**Website** – Be sure and check our website [www.swamplutheran.org](http://www.swamplutheran.org) regularly for updates and schedules of ongoing activities of the church. Full prayer list is in the newsletter each month.

***The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God***

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.  
Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

**GATHERING CAROL**

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

ELW 283

### **Opening Dialogue**

Come! Look upon the baby Jesus,  
cradled in the arms of his mother.

**Seeing this wondrous sight,  
may our hearts be comforted  
and our spirits filled with peace.**

Come! Listen to choirs of angels  
announcing good news to all people.

**Hearing this marvelous song, may we too sing:**

**Glory to God in the highest!**

Come! Receive this ancient story in your heart,  
not as history but as a gift.

**Opening our hearts to this great mystery,  
may Christ be born in us today.**

### GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Sit*

*Children leave for Children's Church*

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**WORD**  
***God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song***

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THE FIRST READING: **Luke 2:1-7** *The Birth of Jesus*

Deb Sweigert

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

LUTHER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE BIRTH OF JESUS

PASTOR SCOTT

Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. . . . What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! . . . Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. . . . You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, p. 33)

**CAROL**

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

ELW 276

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## LUTHER’S REFLECTIONS ON THE SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS

Pastor Scott

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night, and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God. . . . This is a great miracle that the shepherds should have believed this message. They might easily have thought to themselves, “Are we two shepherds worthy that the whole host of heaven should be marshaled for us and all the kings on the earth and the dwellers in Jerusalem be passed by?” I know I would have appealed to common sense and I would have said: “Who am I compared to God and angels and kings? It is an apparition.” But the Holy Spirit, who preached through the angels, caused the shepherds to believe. They were so strong in the faith that they were worthy to be spoken to by angels and to hear every angel in heaven singing a cantata just for them. This is a pure wonder that enters not into the heart of man. Our God begins with angels and ends with shepherds. Why does he do such preposterous things? He puts a Babe in a crib. Our common sense revolts and says, “Could not God have saved the world some other way?” (*Martin Luther’s Christmas Book*, pp. 36, 40)

THE THIRD READING: **Matthew 2:1-12** *The Magi Follow the Star* Denise Kidwell

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Luther's reflections on Herod and the wise men*

Pastor Scott

When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human

wisdom, would surely have said: "Confound it! We have come all this way for nothing. The star has deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears and we find no one who knows anything about him. Can it be that we foreigners should be the first to have news of him in the royal city? Everyone is so cold and unfriendly that no one offers to go with us and show us the child. They do not believe themselves that to them a king is born, and shall we come and find him? How desolate for the birth of a king! If a puppy were born there would be some little stir, and here a king is supposed to be born and everything is so still. . . . Should not the people be singing, capering, lighting lamps and torches, bedecking the streets with roses and mayflowers? What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!" Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word.

But having come, they decided to inquire of the king before returning. At their report, Herod the king "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Why was Herod terrified and all Jerusalem with him? *He* had good reason to be afraid because he had tyrannized over the Jews for thirty years. . . . Now Herod had a crafty plan. "The Jews," thought he, "will hide the truth from me, but I will find out the town where this king is to be born and also the time, and then if they hide him, I will catch him anyway. I will kill so many babies that he cannot escape." So he called the scribes to him and said, "Where is Christ to be born?" Then perhaps through fear, the scribes answered him that in the Prophet Micah it is written that He should be born in Bethlehem. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 50-52)

**CAROL**

THE FIRST NOEL

ELW 300

THE FOURTH READING: **John 1:1-5, 14-18**

*The Mystery of the Incarnation*  
Susan Shirk

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.



<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

LUTHER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE WORD MADE FLESH

Pastor Scott

Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that he should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor he should console and confirm.

This is the word of the prophet: "*Unto us* a child is born, *unto us* a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). This is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that He is the son of the Virgin and God himself, as to believe that this Son of God is ours. That is where we wilt. . . . Truly it is marvelous in our eyes that God should place a little child in the lap of a virgin and that all our blessedness should lie in him. And this Child belongs to all mankind. God feeds the whole world through a Babe nursing at Mary's breast. This must be our daily exercise: to be transformed into Christ, being nourished by this food. Then will the heart be suffused with all joy and will be strong and confident against every assault. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 33, 16)

**CAROL**

LOVE HAS COME

ELW 292

*CHILDREN RETURN FROM CHILDREN'S CHURCH*  
CHILDREN'S SERMON

STAND

## APOSTLES' CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

**was crucified, died, and was buried;**

**he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;**

**he ascended into heaven,**

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic\* church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*\*that is, the true, universal Christian church of all times and places*

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*After each petition:*

Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Please share the peace.*

*Sit*



## OFFERING PRAYER

God of glory,  
**great are your wonders among us  
and many are the blessings you bestow.**  
**Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world,  
that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace,  
through Christ our Savior.**  
**Amen.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,  
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,  
who preached good news to the poor,  
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,  
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,  
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,  
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

God is now in flesh appearing.  
Come to the feast of joy!

**Thanks be to God.**

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Following the direction of the ushers, approach by the center aisle and return to your pew by the side aisles. Please get a cup from the stack by the first pew before receiving bread. Grape Juice and gluten free options are available.*

*After all have communed, stand*

## POST-COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.  
**Amen.**

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## SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world*

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### BLESSING

May the Word that Mary brought to birth  
carry you into new and abundant life.  
May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms  
enfold you with love and strength.  
May the Word that angels proclaimed in song  
bring harmony to our world.  
And the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

### SENDING HYMN

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

ELW 288

### DISMISSAL

Glory to God in the highest!  
**And peace to God's people on earth!**  
Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### POSTLUDE

DING DONG! MERRILY ON HIGH  
ORGAN/PIANO DUET

ARR. ROBERT LAU

**CIRCLE OF PRAYER** - Hunter Leisey, John Frantz, Ed Miller, John Wesner, Jeff Kappenstein, Nettie Kreiner, Clair Sweigart, Faith Moyer, Michael A. Crowther, Reba Ranck, Grace Ranck, Ray Fox, Gene Miller, Jean Wolf, Bobby Hershey, Marilyn Gelsinger, Edith Snyder, Teresa Sweigart, Mel and Troy Ulrich, Earl Myers, Elizabeth Sherman, Judy Habecker, Anna Rose Schannauer, Jerry Landis, Mary Beth Jenkins, Evelyn Gehman, Joan Leed, Ron Adams, Kevin Williams, Susan Levan, Larry Eberly, Janet Bingaman, Dwayne Dimitris, Gladys Eckenroad, Bonnie Koehle-Koon, Chris Zander, Kathleen Troutman, Sally Bergman, Keith Reimert, Pam Heisey, Connie Malafarina, Ted Heisey, Regina Reinecker, Karen Klingensmith, Debbie Leed, Sue Van Zant, Alex Merionfeld, Susan Kreitz, Helen Werner, Cody Leisey, Lowell Haws, Anson Kauffman, Randy Krater, Michelle Moyer, Janet Craley, Scott Zook, Clarice Haws, Lisa Evans (Co-worker of Katie Krater), and Dianna Becker (Gockley's neighbor), the family of Maggie Kiralfy (Jen Brubaker's mother), Laurie Sauder, Sue Templin, Glenn Beard Sr, Ray Weitzel, Clyde Showalter and Michael Hagy.

**ALTAR FLOWERS** are given to wish all a blessed New Year.

**SANCTUARY CANDLE** is given in memory of loved ones by Larry and Sue Ellen Knauer.

### **Week in the Parish (December 28- January 4)**

December 31	NEW YEAR'S EVE	
January 1	NEW YEAR'S DAY	OFFICE CLOSED
January 2	OFFICE CLOSED	
January 4	8:30AM	Worship

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

January 5	7:00PM	Bell Choir
January 6	6:00PM	Zoom Bible Study
January 6	7:00PM	Welcome Cmte
January 7	7:00PM	Choir
January 8	6:30PM	Learning Cmte
January 11	8:30AM	Worship
January 11	9:45AM	Sunday School
January 13	6:00PM	Zoom Bible Study
January 14	1-4:00PM	EASS Food Distribution
January 14	7:00PM	Choir
January 18	8:30AM	Worship
January 18	9:45AM	Sunday School- Intergenerational

January 19	MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY	
January 19	OFFICE CLOSED	
January 19	7:00PM	Bell Choir
January 20	6:00PM	Zoom Bible Study
January 21	7:00PM	Choir
January 21	7:00PM	Church Council
January 23	1:00PM	Widow & Widowers Reading Museum

### **Greeter Schedule December**

28 Lee & Jodi Showalter

### **Greeter Schedule for January**

04 Deb Sweigert

11 John Frantz

18 Brian & Katie Koehle

25 David & Laraine Kramer

### **Coffee Schedule for December**

28 John Frantz

### **Coffee Schedule for January**

04 Deb Sweigert

11 Ray Weitzel

18 Pam Leisey

25 Randy Gockley

### **Sound System Schedule January**

04 Steve Laudenslager

11 Steve Laudenslager

18 Steve Laudenslager

25 Steve Laudenslager

### **Video Stream Schedule January**

04 Josh Garrison

11 Alan Worley

18 John Frantz

25 Joah Garrison

### **DAILY READINGS FOR THE COMING WEEK**

*Mon December 29* Psalm 20 Jeremiah 31:15-22 Luke 19:41-44

*Tue December 30* Psalm 20 Isaiah 26:1-9 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*Wed December 31* Psalm 20 1 Kings 3:5-14 John 8:12-19 Numbers 6:22-27

*Thurs January 1 Name of Jesus* Numbers 6:22-27 Psalm 8 Galatians 4:4-7 or Philippians 2:5-11 Luke 2:15-21

*Fri January 2* Psalm 72 Genesis 12:1-7 Hebrews 11:1-12

*Sat January 3* Psalm 72 Genesis 28:10-22 Hebrews 11:13-22

### **UPCOMING SUNDAY READINGS**

*Sun January 4* Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, Ephesians 1:3-14, John (1-9) 10-18

**FLOWERS:** Altar flowers are needed for January 11, 2026.

If you would like to sponsor a Sunday for the flowers or candle in 2026, please contact Sue Kreitz at 717-283-9444 or John Frantz at 717-606-8994.



**Grumbine's Flowers** is looking to relocate and will not guarantee fresh altar flower arrangements beyond February 2026. In the event that Grumbine's discontinues service, the flower committee will be discussing options and/or alternatives. In the meantime, please continue to sign up for flower sponsorships via Sue, John, or the flower calendar. Candle sponsorships will not be changing.

**FOOD BANK** – Needs of the food bank are ongoing and need replenished monthly. There is a need for canned chicken, tuna, soup, paper towels and toilet paper. Please check for a current expiration date. Thank you for helping as you are able. We distribute on the 2nd Wednesday each month.

**ACTION FUND** – Donations are sought for Swamp Action Fund to help the needy in our community. Write "Action Fund" in the comment line of your check payable to Swamp Lutheran Church.



**Knitters and Crocheters:** We have been asked to provide baby blankets for Veteran Families. Please use SOFT yarn with not too loose of a pattern and no more than 32" X 32," but not less than 27" square or rectangular. There are some copies of baby blanket patterns in the library at church where the shawls/blankets are being collected. We need more boy colors than girl colors.

**Attention Thrivent Financial Members.** The Thrivent "Action Teams" program is an opportunity for Thrivent members to lead projects that provide service and outreach to the community. Thrivent Financial will provide funds of \$250 for each project to get started and pay for associated expenses. You may request two grants per year. Swamp Lutheran has many needs, like the monthly food pantry, events, etc. that qualify under this program. If you wish to direct your grant request to help with Swamp Lutheran's activities, please reach out to Lori Gockley who will assist you with the process. Email: [lgockley2@gmail.com](mailto:lgockley2@gmail.com) or call 717-203-8551

**SAVE THE DATE** – January 18

Intergenerational Sunday School Class – Theme is Epiphany

January 18 @ 9:45 AM in Social Hall

Ages 5th grade and older – come one, come all

**Swamp Needs Your Help!**  
***Tell Pastor Scott if you can help or want to learn more***

**Most pressing needs include:**

**Communion Extender:** We need helpers to take communion to our homebound members. Training provided.

**Choir:** We welcome singers for Swamp's Chancel Choir.

**Bell Choir:** Ringers needed for this music ministry.

**Learning Committee:** We could use new committee members interested in fostering the faith of our disciples, both young and old.

**SLY:** We need additional leaders on our team to guide this ministry.

**Sunday School teachers:** Helpers and teachers needed.

**Worship Committee:** We can always use fresh perspectives on worship.

**Generosity Committee:** We need additional disciples to help promote generosity to God's work at Swamp.

**Property Committee:** We need help attending to the property needs of Swamp. Consider adopting a flower bed to maintain or giving of a skill (electrician, plumbing, carpentry, painting, etc.).



**IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN!**

**What:** The *Souper Bowl of Caring* is a national movement across the nation working together to fight hunger and poverty in their communities around the time of the Super Bowl football game.

**When:** Until Super Bowl Sunday, February 8, 2026

**Where:** Bring canned soup and other nonperishable food items and place them beneath the goal post in the Narthex.

**Who:** Benefits Swamp Food Pantry

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**December 28, 2025**

**FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**

**God Still Speaks**

Today's gospel reading, Matthew 2:1-3-23, contains a terrible story. There is no way around that fact; there is no way to wrap this account in fancy paper and tie it with a bow, disguising the fact that this is a terrible story. There have always been terrible stories; maybe there always will be. And yet, tucked in and around and between Bible stories of death, despair, and hopelessness are often stories of new life, courage, and hope. This gospel text is no exception.

Where is God when evil happens? This is a question people have pondered since time began. What the Bible tells us over and over is that God never abandons people, no matter how bad things get. As God was with Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as they rushed to leave the area and find shelter in Egypt, God was with all families in Bethlehem too, weeping alongside them.

In today's story, God speaks to Joseph through his dreams. Remarkably, Joseph responds by fleeing to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, and then returning to Judea after Herod dies. While we're more likely to set dreams aside as we look at all the facts and weigh all our options, Joseph simply pays attention and acts. If he had waited for some sort of proof that Egypt was the only way out for him and his family, this would be a very different story.

God still speaks to us today, especially in holy baptism, holy communion, and the Bible. In the gospel reading, what might God be saying to you and to your faith community? How might you spend more time listening for God this week?

**Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church**

717-336-2849

[www.swamplutheran.org](http://www.swamplutheran.org)

[secretary@swamplutheran.org](mailto:secretary@swamplutheran.org)

Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30AM – 12:00 noon

The Rev. Scott V. Brubaker, Pastor

Cell: 717-598-4663 Email: [pastor@swamplutheran.org](mailto:pastor@swamplutheran.org)

Terri Renninger, Church Secretary – 717-336-2849

Jonathan Gyorke, Sexton – 717-435-3091

Sue Kreitz, Organist/Choir Director – 717-283-9444

Grady Daub, Assistant Organist – 717-917-2430

Doug Kulp, Bell Choir Director – 717-336-7798

Lori Gockley, Council President – 717-733-1095

SUNDAY WORSHIP 8:30AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45AM

**You are**

**Here!**

**Welcome**

At Swamp Lutheran Church, *Grace is Spoken Here!* We welcome with full participation and inclusion all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, imprisonment, physical or mental health, socio-economic circumstances or anything that too often divides us. Together as one in the Spirit, our unity is in Jesus Christ.

**Notice Regarding Audio/Video Recording and/or Photography of Services/Events:**

Persons participating in events or worship services sponsored by Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church are subject to being recorded by photographic, video, and/or audio devices. Your photo/recording may be used without your written permission. By attending a Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church service or event, you release our employees and officers and all persons involved from any liability connected with the taking, recording, digitizing, and/or publication of photographs, computer images, video and/or sound recordings.

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