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January, 2025

**MARK: MY WORDS**

It is said that one must hear/read something seven times before it becomes embedded in one’s memory and consciousness. This is only the second time for part of this article, but I promise that I won’t repeat it for the next five months 😊. In looking at last year’s January newsletter in my files, I found this introduction to the season of Epiphany that I thought bore repeating. The excerpt from *Sundays and Seasons* below will be different because we are in a different liturgical year, that of St. Luke’s Gospel instead of St. Mark. The overview still holds true and hopefully will provide helpful background on this often overlooked but vital transitional time between Christmas and Easter:

Epiphany is the “quiet season” of the church year. It lacks the urgency of Advent’s call to “prepare the way of the Lord” and the joyful celebration of the Twelve Days of Christmas. It does not summon us to the searching self-examination of Lent and does not carry the emotional heft of the Three Great Days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

While its festivals of The Epiphany of Our Lord and The Baptism of Our Lord are vitally important to the Church’s life and proclamation, it does not equal Easter’s central good news of the faith that Jesus is alive forever from death. And, while its color is green like the long season of Pentecost, its call to mission is not as clear as that time of the Spirit. Even its duration is uncertain: depending on the date of Easter, it can be as short as five weeks or as long as nine (including The Transfiguration).

So, what is the theme of these weeks? A helpful essay from our ELCA worship resource *Sundays and Seasons* offers good insight:

“St. Paul’s poetic chapter on the depth and breadth of love (1 Corinthians 13) stands at the center of this season’s readings and provides a keystone to hold the remainder of Epiphany and its texts in place. While the lectionary for the second reading throughout this ordinary time provides a sweeping overview of Paul’s wisdom and counsel to the troubled church at Corinth, the gospel texts, for the most part, give us a glimpse into the early ministry of Jesus through Luke’s theological lens. The feasts of the Lord’s baptism, presentation, and transfiguration provide vistas across the season to glance back to Bethlehem’s manger and forward to Calvary’s cross…”

“…The overall arc of the season, despite Paul’s call for abiding love, is rife with contradiction and conflict. Jesus’ preaching in Nazareth fills the synagogue with rage (Luke 4:21-30, Epiphany 4C). At the presence of the Lord of hosts, Isaiah’s cry mutates from “I am a man of unclean lips,” to “Send me!” (Isaiah 6:1-8, Epiphany 5C). And Jesus, in this same Sunday’s gospel, invites self-identified sinners to become his inner circle (Luke 5, Epiphany 5C). Echoes of the Magnificat resound through Luke’s version of the beatitudes (6:17-26, Epiphany 6C), where those rich and full are contrasted with the poor and hungry from Mary’s song. Jeremiah gives voice to our devious hearts (17:5-10, Epiphany 6C), yet Jesus calls for those very hearts to be turned in love toward our enemies (Luke 6:27-38, Epiphany 7C)…”

“…To approach the season’s preaching of Christ, incarnate among us to initiate God’s reign, is to honor the manifestation that Epiphany offers. Preaching that points to Jesus’ destination at the cross and in the resurrection is to seal the season’s promise Amid the present moment of lives in turmoil, isolation, and distress, the promise of Christ is an astonishing contradiction. Through the One made known to mysterious travelers from afar, presented into the arms of the faithful in the temple, baptized by John, and proclaiming a message of beloved belonging for all, we find meaning and hope. The dawn of the new age and our participation in it through our baptism into Christ call us into community where, despite our differences and our despair, we are formed to live with one another and all creation in faith, hope, and—the greatest of these—love.”

  This year Epiphany runs for seven weeks including The Transfiguration. It may not be as well-known or loved as some other seasons of the church year but its mission and God’s work through it are no less important.



**A PERSONAL NOTE**

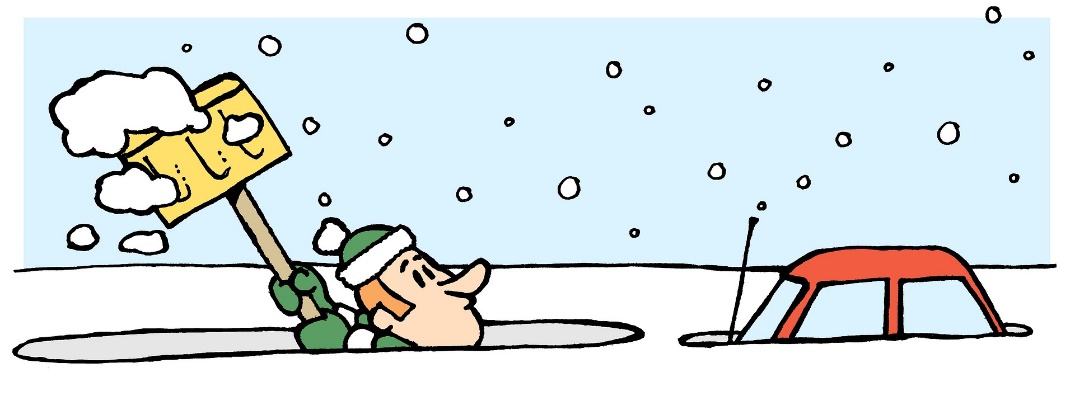
Please accept our great gratitude to all who sent our family Christmas cards and notes. Your prayerful support and wishes of joy and peace in these days greatly increased our celebration of Christmas. We are ever thankful for our continued partnership in this Gospel ministry.

**THE EPIPHANY/BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

Unlike last year, this January allows us to celebrate two of the most important festivals of the church year on their own instead of combining them. The Epiphany of Our Lord, one of the six major feast days (along with Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, Trinity, and Pentecost) falls on Monday, January 6, this year. That makes it easy for us to move our observance to the previous Saturday the 4th and Sunday the 5th.

On the following weekend, we will focus on the minor festival of The Baptism of Our Lord on Saturday the 11th and Sunday the 12th. Each of these days has a long and rich tradition in the Church’s worship, and it will be good to be able to give each their proper due.



**SNOW EMERGENCY LIST**

This is a reminder of where to turn to learn if worship has been canceled because of inclement weather conditions. There are three ways to learn about the status of the service. First, you may tune in to WEFM-95.9 FM to listen for a list of churches who have called off worship. Second, you may turn to our church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stpaulmichigancity/> for updated announcements. Finally, you may call the church office number (219-874-7293) and press the “#” key; you will hear a recording about our “open/closed” status.



**CHURCH COUNCIL**

It has been our custom to install our Church Council on the first Sunday in January. However, since the first Sunday will be a full service celebrating The Epiphany of Our Lord (see above) and the second Sunday will celebrate The Baptism of Our Lord and also involves the Healing Rite, we will move the installation to the third Sunday, January 19. They were elected at the November congregational meeting by consensus. Here are the council members for 2025 (\* indicates a newly elected member):

President Janet Bakken

Vice-President Donna Knoll

Treasurer Karen Fleming

Secretary Judy Hunt

Paul Brooks

Judy Mutchler

\*Trish Sprague

\*Jim Schraidt

Diane Egilske

\*Sue Koziel

We are deeply grateful for their willingness to serve in this vital leadership position. Please remember them in your prayers, asking for God’s wisdom and guidance as they help us face our challenges as a congregation.

We want to thank those who have completed their service on the Council: Bob Kiser, Susan Bagby, Wayne Dolson, Jean Kleinschmidt and Diane Waltz.



**ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE**

For a variety of reasons, the 150th Anniversary Committee has not met for a number of months. We have scheduled a meeting for January 15 to resume planning the special events that will take place during 2026. We have a rough outline of the year sketched out but want to begin to fill in our plans more concretely. We will keep the congregation informed as those decisions are made and finalized.



**THANK YOU FROM THE BISHOP**

As you might recall on Tuesday, November 19, we hosted a “Meet and Greet” with our new Bishop Timothy Graham. Clergy from the South Bend area and our local pastors along with congregation members attended a worship service in which he preached, and then the pastors had a discussion time with him followed by a delicious lunch afterwards. I received this very kind and thoughtful handwritten note from him about that day:

“Dear Pastor Reshan, allow me to share a note of thanks to you and your congregation, St. Paul Lutheran Church, for warm hospitality and authentic leadership. I recall the natural strain of such events when we hosted Bishop Bill for some similar events. As such, I realize the extra work it created for you all, even if you didn’t mind.

“The gathering time was pleasant, the worship was fulfilling and meaningful, the discussion was rich and the food satisfying and delightful. Again, thank you for your efforts and your congregation’s sacrifices to make the day event so enjoyable and impactful.

“Wishing you and St. Paul Lutheran Church God’s richest blessings now and always. In Christ’s love, Bishop Tim.”



**CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS**

Thank you again to all our faithful volunteers for their hard and excellent work in preparing, setting up, and taking down the many decorations that beautify our worship space and building for the Twelve Days of Christmas. As always, when you see them, please express your gratitude for their ministry among and for us.

Christmas Tree Bob and Karen Kiser; Larry and Judy

Litchford; Casey, Kelly, and Brad Neulieb

Poinsettia plants Sue Koziel, Karen Steinborn

Advent Log Sandy Galinowski, Bernadette Krueger

Large wooden cross Janet Bakken, Sue Koziel, Karen Steinborn

Garland (outer narthex and Communion railings) Karen Steinborn, Sue Koziel

Window treatments (nave and outside) Sue Koziel, Karen Steinborn

Outside lights and wreaths Tina Zimmerman-Putnam and Serviscape crew

Upper narthex nativity scene and creche Pastor Mark Kloess, Jary Tannehill, Stacie

Crozier

**SOME OF OUR SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGERS**

A person and person standing next to a sign

Description automatically generated A person and person holding signs

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A group of women holding signs

Description automatically generated Two women standing in front of a christmas tree

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On December 7, 2024, St. Paul helped the Salvation Army in their Red Kettle Campaign.  A list of those who signed up to ‘man the kettle’ for one hour are listed below.  We want to offer our sincere “Thank You” to each of them for donating an hour of their time during a very busy time of year.

Stacie Crozier and Sue Koziel   Craig and Judy Hunt

Sandy and Jim Galinowski   Karen Steinborn and Kerry Beth Steinborn

Rich and Karen Fleming      Jean Kleinschmidt and Carol Spreitzor

Gail Leffew and Liz Lasater Ken and Ruth Baker

Bob & Karen Kiser

If you are wondering why some of the people are holding up a sign that reads “ding-dong,” it is because Al’s asked that no bells be rung inside.  It is too close to their cash registers to have bells rung constantly.



**MONTHLY MISSION**

Thank you for your support of the two December missions: Salvation Army Angel Tree and Keys to Hope Kringle Kits. We were able to donate a carload (literally!) of toys to Salvation Army and two big totes and several bags of supplies to Keys to Hope. Many people in our community will have a joyful holiday due to your generous giving!

Our January Monthly Mission is the Caring Clothing Co-op, a non-profit located in New Carlisle was started to do large-scale hand me downs for every person. They take clean, stain-free, rip-free, up-to-date clothing, clean beds, bedding, heaters, air conditioners, pots & pans, medical equipment, towels, dish towels, curtains, diapers, unexpired/not opened formula, dishes, silverware, baby items, and small kitchen appliances. They help anyone and everyone who walks through their door. It is 100% volunteer ran; nobody receives a paycheck. All monetary donations support their mission or their minimal operating costs, such as paying for their dumpster or upkeep on the co-op vehicle. The co-op also needs warm blankets for families this winter. A bin has been placed in the Narthex for blankets. Checks can be made out to St. Paul, marked for the Caring Clothing Co-op, and placed in the offering plate. The noisy coin offering for the month will also go towards this mission. Thank you for your generosity!



**DECEMBER COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

There was no Church Council meeting in December.



**IN MEMORY OF DONALD THIELMAN**

**and NORMAN & MARCELLA O’DONNELL**

**General Fund** from Richard & Kathy Thielman

**IN MEMORY OF CHARLES THOMAS, SR.**

**General Fund** from Thomas P. Thomas

**IN MEMORY OF GRANDPARENTS, NORMAN & DOROTHY;**

**DEAR FRIEND, ALAN KRING; and FATHER, ROGER MILZAREK**

**General Fund** from Terry & Kristi Milzarek

**IN MEMORY OF HUSBAND, ROGER MILZAREK**

**General Fund** from Norma Milzarek

**IN MEMORY OF DEAR CLASSMATE & FRIEND, DAVID MEYER**

**General Fund** from Bill Marshall

**IN MEMORY OF JANICE WHITE**

**General Fund** from Virginia Murray

**IN MEMORY OF KENNETH HANFT, SR.**

**General Fund** from Myrna Shriner; Marie Wienhoft; Helen Hill-Weaver; Chuck Benson;

Tammy & Roger Stone; Robin, Jeremy & Madison; Conner; Daniel & Allison Guthrie



**January Birthdays January Anniversaries**

5 Laura Mellen 3 Daniel & Andrea Ottersen

6 Fred LaBorn 12 Bradford & Kelly Neulieb

JoAnn Kring 14 Richard & Donna Collins

9 Susan Bagby 15 Jeffrey & Maria Furness

10 Donald Thompson

Debbie Martin

David Zummak

11 Stacie Summers

12 James Burdett

18 Mark Tannehill

19 Amy Haring

25 Wayne Simerlein

26 Stacie Crozier

28 Elaine Bogart

Eloise Ponder

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**Long-Term Prayer List**

Laura Dovey Russ Fischer Jess Kalvaitis

Christine Kiser Bethany Manning Shirley McCarty

Jan Paholski Grace Romine Danielle Schnell

Martha Schroeder Jeanie Boatman Shepple Joyce Stark

Kathy Stein Mark Tannehill Kathy Thielman

Venia Wendt Brian Wiseman



Monday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Wednesday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

**St. Paul Lutheran Church Staff**

Pastor Rev. Mark Reshan

Secretary Libby Pollock

Accompanists Jary Tannehill, Mark Tannehill, Jacob Tannehill

Custodian Mark Kloess

Thank$ for $haring

This month, we will see you at Holly’s on Tuesday, January 7.  Here are two coupons: one for you and one for a friend.

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