

January 4, 2025

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# The Pathlight

*Your Word Is A Lamp To My Feet  
and a Light to My Path.  
Ps 119:105*

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## The Light that Overcomes the Darkness

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1, 14

The words “in the beginning” take us back to Genesis. We know the account of a perfect, pristine creation by God in six days which comes crashing down as a consequence of sin by the one man that “led to condemnation for all men” (Romans 5:18). The darkness of sin and thereby man’s condemnation under the law is only overcome by divine Light.

The St. John proclaims this Light; this redemption found in the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us. John’s description of Jesus deserves our compilation, because he speaks of Jesus’ divinity as the everlasting Word in the beginning through Whom all things were made. Where the other Gospels begin with emphasizing the humanity of Jesus, John begins with His divinity. Jesus wasn’t another prophet or rabbi, but the everlasting Word Incarnate, God Himself coming to dwell among us not in a Temple or Tent, but in the flesh and blood person of Christ crucified and risen from the dead. We know Him as the Son of the Father Who testifies “I and the Father are One” (John 10:30) and “before Abraham was, I Am” (John 8:58).

In view of so many heresies, past and present, which denounce Jesus as God, this confession of Jesus Christ as Lord must be boldly proclaimed in faithful conviction which only God the Holy Spirit can give to His people. There is no other way to the Father except through the Son, Who is the “Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6) and calling sinners to repentance and faith in the One Who will always outshine this dark world.

The people of God believe and confess this Word by faith, and John clarifies for us that this too is God’s work. Children of God aren’t made by the will of the flesh but God. It’s His divine work to bring life from death. The dark, dead heart becomes filled with life in the believer—faith in the Word made flesh. It’s this faith that finds comfort in the promises of God when it seems that darkness has won and any victory belongs to the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31). No, the darkness doesn’t win. The Word Made Flesh has made sure of it. The darkness cannot overcome the Light. The Light that shines now and for all eternity in the heart of all the faithful.

Pastor Christensen

*For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Cor. 13:12*

## **Lutheran Worship Service Book**

### **Order of Worship**

**HYMN #374** “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child”

**LITURGY** pg.184 Divine Service (setting Three) with Communion

**CONFESSiON AND ABSOLUTION** pg184

**INTROIT** pg.186

**SALUTATION and COLLECT** pg. 189

**OLD TESTAMENT READING:** 1 Kings 3:4-15

**EPiSTLE:** Ephesians 1:3-14

**HOLY GOSPEL:** Luke 2:40-52

**NICENE CREED** pg.191

**HYMN of THE DAY #410** “Within the Father’s House”

**SERMON**

**OFFERING**

**OFFERATORY** pg.192

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT** pg.194

**DISTRIBUTION HYMN**

**HYMN #618** “I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table”

#393 “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

**BENEDICTION** pg. 202

**CLOSING HYMN #386** “Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”

**SILENT PRAYER**

**Serving Today**

**St. Paul**

Usher/Greeters-Jeff Larsen/David Orth/Organist-Gail Nicolaus

**Zion**

Usher/Greeters-Dayton & Jodi, Alter Guild-Shelle/Jodi

Organist-Gail Nicolaus



## Calendar of Events

### St. Paul

**Jan. 4** 2:00PM – Assisted Living Worship

**Jan. 5**-9:00AM-Bible Study

**Jan. 7**-5:00PM-Catechism

**Jan. 11**-8:00AM-Bible Study

9:00AM-Worship Service

**Servants for Worship Service**-Randy Renquist/Gerry Priest/Gail Nicolaus

### Zion

**Jan. 7**-3:30PM-Midweek

**Jan. 11**-10:00AM-Sunday School

11:00AM-Worship Service/Comm.

**Servants for Worship Service**- Dayton & Jodi/Shelle & Jodi/Jeanie Boehm

**Dear Friends in Christ,** Thank you for your heartfelt cards and thoughtful gifts this Christmas season. Your kindness has been a true blessing and a reminder of the warmth and generosity that fill our congregation. We are deeply grateful for each expression of care and for the joy we share in Christ's birth. May God's peace continue to surround you in the days ahead.

In Christ,

Pastor & Joline Christensen



**Jan. 10-Marvin Nelson, Susan Larsen**

**Jan.11-Kristine Neugabauer, Ryan Heidemann**



**Jan. 7-Troy and Julie Kotch**



Here are **five hard Bible riddles** themed around the **Second Sunday after Christmas**, which often focuses on Jesus' early life, the flight to Egypt, and prophecies fulfilled.

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### 1. The Hidden King

A king feared me though I was small,  
His wrath made mothers weep and call.  
I left my town by angel's word,  
To keep the promise they had heard.

**Who am I?**

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### 2. The Silent Witness

I stood in a house where strangers knelt,  
Their gifts of gold and incense smelt.  
I saw a star but made no sound,  
In prophecy my name is found.

**What am I?**

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### 3. The Ancient Echo

I spoke before the child was born,  
My words were like a trumpet horn.  
"Out of Egypt I will call my son"—  
When this was done, my task was done.

**Who am I?**

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## 4. The Guiding Light

I moved but never walked a mile,  
I led the wise with patient style.  
I stopped above the humble place,  
Where heaven's King showed human face.

**What am I?**

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## 5. The Dream Protector

I spoke in sleep, not in the day,  
I warned a man to flee away.  
My words preserved the promised seed,  
Who am I in this time of need?

**Who am I?**

1. **Answer:** Jesus as an infant (Matthew 2:13–15).
2. **Answer:** Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
3. **Answer:** The prophecy of Hosea (Hosea 11:1).
4. **Answer:** The Star of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:9–10).
5. **Answer:** The angel in Joseph's dream (Matthew 2:13).



## “Sanctuary Smiles”



### The Sunday School Artist

The teacher asked the kids to draw something from the Bible. One little boy drew a big circle with three stick figures inside. “What story is this?” she asked.

He said proudly, “It’s the Holy Family... on a Zoom call.”

### The Offering Envelope Mystery

A child put a note in the offering envelope instead of money. It said: “Dear God, I owe you \$1. I will pay you Friday after chores.” Even God appreciates a responsible payment plan!



## Devotion for the Second Sunday After Christmas

### “Guided by the **Light** We Didn’t Expect”

**John 1:1–18 & Jeremiah 31:7–14**

The days after Christmas carry a different kind of light. The bright excitement of Christmas Eve has softened. The wrapping paper is gone, the cookies are fewer, and the world seems to settle into a quieter rhythm. Yet the church, in her wisdom, keeps us near the manger just a little longer. The Second Sunday after Christmas invites us to linger in the glow of Christ’s coming—not the noisy celebration, but the deep, steady light that guides us into a new year.

John’s Gospel doesn’t give us shepherds or angels or a star. Instead, he gives us a truth so profound it almost takes our breath away:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

This is the heart of the season after Christmas. Christ has come into the world—not just into a stable, but into every shadowed place where we need hope, healing, and direction. And His light is not fragile. It does not flicker. It does not fade when life becomes complicated or uncertain. It shines, steady and sure, even when we cannot see the path ahead.

Jeremiah’s words echo this promise. He speaks to a people who have known exile, loss, and fear. Yet God declares,

“I will turn their mourning into joy... and I will comfort them.”

The God who comes near in Bethlehem is the same God who gathers, restores, and leads His people home.

### A Story: The **Lighthouse Keeper’s Daughter**

There is an old story about a lighthouse keeper who lived on a rugged coastline with his young daughter. Every evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, he climbed the narrow stairs to light the great lamp that guided ships safely through the rocks.

One winter, a fierce storm rolled in—thick fog, icy winds, waves crashing like thunder. The keeper was called away to help a stranded fishing crew, leaving his daughter with one instruction:

“Keep the light burning. No matter what happens, keep it burning.”

Hours passed. The storm grew worse. The girl could hear the wind howling and the sea pounding against the cliffs. She was frightened, but she climbed the stairs and checked the flame again and again. At one point, the wind blew so hard it nearly snuffed the lantern out. She shielded it with her small hands, trembling but determined.

Late that night, the keeper returned, soaked and exhausted. He found his daughter still at her post, guarding the flame. He wrapped her in his coat and whispered, “You did it. A ship saw the light tonight. They made it safely because you kept it burning.”

The girl looked out at the dark sea and realized something:

She had been afraid, but the light had never been in danger. It was stronger than she knew. Her job was simply to tend it.

### **This is the message of the Second Sunday after Christmas.**

We do not create the light.

We do not sustain the light.

We simply tend it.

Christ is the Light—steady, unchanging, victorious.

Our calling is to keep turning toward Him, even when the world feels stormy or uncertain.

Maybe you’re stepping into a new year with questions.

Maybe you’re carrying burdens that didn’t disappear when the calendar changed.

Maybe you’re longing for direction, comfort, or renewal.

#### **The Gospel assures us:**

The Light has come, and the darkness cannot overcome Him.

Jeremiah reminds us:

God gathers His people and leads them with compassion.

And the lighthouse story teaches us:

Even when we feel small, God’s light is strong enough to guide us—and others—safely through.

### **Reflection for the Week**

- Where do you need Christ’s light to shine in this new year?
- What “small acts of tending” help you stay close to Him—prayer, Scripture, worship, service?
- Who in your life might need the steady glow of Christ’s love through you?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, shine in our hearts as we step into this new year.

When we feel uncertain, guide us.

When we feel weary, strengthen us.

When we feel afraid, remind us that Your light cannot be overcome.

Help us tend the flame of faith with trust, hope, and love.

Amen.





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