

the Voice parish newsletter



*By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and wept.
On the willows we hung our harps. --Psalm 137:1-2*

Happy New Year, but for some it will not be happy. On Christmas Day, a childhood friend went to the hospital. He'd been enduring a terminal diagnosis and died two days after Christmas. Life is brief; filled with questions.

In his book, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, David Ray Griffin notes a difference between humans and animals. Our burden is knowing death is inevitable. We anticipate it and use rituals (like funeral rites) to transition from life. Our awareness of death's approach makes death a problem for us more than it is for animals. The thought of death weighs on our minds...

- ***Did our lives have any ultimate meaning?*** We feel the need to make a permanent contribution and fear we've not.
- ***Why was life unfair?*** Many, through no fault of their own, are born to poverty from which they can't escape. Others, through no merit of their own, are born to fortune and 'game' life to increase their advantages.
- ***We are never ready for life to end.*** Longing for more time on earth is a permanent feature of human existence.
- ***When death comes, we want to be saved.*** We want an afterlife in which unrealized hopes on earth will be fulfilled.

What 2024 will bring remains to be seen. What separates us from animals is self-consciousness and the deep questions that come with it. For the new year, I'm planning monthly topics for the Monday night and Thursday morning Bible studies. What we discuss will change monthly, but every topic will mean facing deep questions. In gratitude for being human, not an animal, I hope you'll attend a study group on one of these days in one or more of the months. Let's make the most of the new year, being grateful to God for the ability to anticipate and prepare for what lies ahead. Our lives are hidden and safe in Christ. Jesus is with us to the end of the age. Happy New Year!

Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church
975 Washington Road Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania 15228

In Christ,

Pastor Doug Heagy



January, 2024



JANUARY 2024 BIBLE STUDIES

“Stories of Social Justice”

Honoring the life of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

MONDAY NIGHT

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

January 8	Genesis 16-17, 21
January 15	MLK, Jr. Speech
January 22	Acts 6:1-7
January 29	Luke 4:16-30

THURSDAY MORNING

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM

January 4	Genesis 22
January 11	Amos 4:1-3; 6
January 18	Acts 8:1-29
January 25	Leviticus 25

Led by Pastor Heagy, these studies will focus on social justice with attention given to the life and ministry of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From the Stewardship Committee

2024: Your year for abundant living

Many Christians think of “stewardship” only in financial terms, but money is only one of the gifts God entrusts us with – and it’s usually the one we value less than our gifts of time, relationships, faith and health.

Make 2024 your year for holistic stewardship - and abundant living – by taking steps to care better for ALL the gifts God entrusts to us, including our finances. Here are tips.

Health: Get a physical and ask your doctor to help you to form a strategy for better living. For most of us, the plan would include eating better, exercising more and practicing wellness.

Relationships: We not only share love and joy with family and friends, but also turn to and rely on them in times of trouble. Care for your relationships with honest and frequent communication, get-togethers and sharing. Renew and repair relationships that need it.

Time: Are you just mindlessly counting the hours and days? Take charge of your time by planning events and activities that enrich your life. Plan for health and relationships.

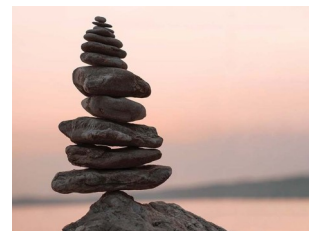
Faith: No matter where you are on your discipleship journey, all of us can draw closer to God and open ourselves more fully to the Holy Spirit. For 2024, commit to regular worship, prayer, Scripture reading, devotions, service and other faith practices.

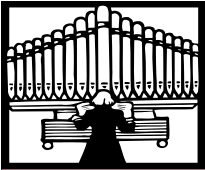
Money: Get your finances in order. Consider the 10-10-80 plan, budgeting your income to save 10 percent, give away 10 percent, and living on 80 percent.

God has given us so much. Stewarding the most important aspects of our lives can bring us into the life of abundance that Jesus promises us in John 10:10.

--Rob Blezard

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Musical Musings—January, 2024

*Dear Mt Lebanon Lutheran Family,
I wanted to express a word of gratitude for the members of our choir. Every year at Christmas I am so thankful for their dedication to the music ministry. They give their time week in and out to add so much to the worship services at Mt. Lebanon Lutheran. Additionally, they help keep my head on straight when I am out of sorts. I hope you all have a wonderful new year, and here's to continued music making in 2024 and beyond.*

Chris Keenan



SUNDAY SERVER SCHEDULE: January, 2024

If you cannot serve as scheduled, please switch with another server. If you cannot get a substitute call the church office at 412-563-0300 or Pastor Doug at [412] 926-5440; or email the church at mtleboluth@aol.com



	8:30	10:00
January 7 Crucifer	Max Bruno	Chase Lutz
January 14 Crucifer	Mackenna Cercone	Gabriel Provins
January 21 Crucifer	Sam Wetzell	Luke Frankovitch
January 28 Crucifer	Henry Keplar	Finn Darcy



The worship links to Facebook & YouTube can be found on our website:



www.mtlebanonlutheran.org

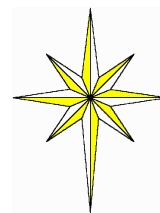
Sunday's
8:30 AM & 10:00 AM
Virtual Worship 8:30 AM Facebook LIVE
Posted later on our YouTube channel

THE WORD of the LORD

January 7	Baptism of Our Lord
	Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11
January 14	Epiphany 2
	1 Samuel 3:1-10 Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 John 1:43-51
January 21	Epiphany 3
	Johan 3:1-5, 10 Psalm 62:5-12 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20
January 28	Epiphany 4
	Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Psalm III 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Mark 1:21-28



Images of Epiphany



Epiphany is a season *out of sorts*. To many Christians in the West, the feast from which the Epiphany weeks are named seems something like a misplaced Christmas. Popular piety and more than one Christmas Eve worship has placed the Magi at the manger beside the shepherds [and in many South Hills' front yards as well!]

The Season of Christmas lasts just two weeks! And when it ends, and like children who have opened all their presents, we're not sure what to do next! Is the excitement over? Do we go back to what we had been doing a few weeks ago?

The Season of Epiphany is a time for rejoicing in the light that shines in our darkness, the light that reveals both our sin and the One who has come to forgive it.

The major feature of the Christian Epiphany is that it provides an affirmation that whatever disclosures of the ultimate might come among us, the essence of God's disclosure in and through Jesus lays bare both the complexity of our own existence and the wonder of God's being.

As the Magi travel to Bethlehem, the proclamation is that the Christ child is born for the whole world. The identity of the travelers from the East remains a mystery, but they were Gentiles.

They found the one they sought not among the powerful or even comfortable. The one sent to reveal God to the nations came by means of an oppressed people and was greeted by foreigners.

The message of Epiphany is clear: Light shines not only in darkness, but God acts through the *unlikely* to touch the lives of the excluded.

And this theme continues throughout the Epiphany Season starting with Jesus' baptism at the River Jordan; God in man made manifest to all of creation. It continues until the final Sunday of the Epiphany Season, the Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord [February 11], on which the revelation comes even to those who persistently misunderstood it.





ONLINE GIVING

Is now available in association with



myEoffering

www.mtlebanonlutheran.org

WHAT IS myEoffering?

myEoffering is a service we've teamed up with to give you the ability to send your offerings online in the same way that many of you already pay bills and purchase products. We chose to use myEoffering because they are part of a trusted, Christian family-owned company, who have been serving the needs of churches for nearly 100 years. Their product is solid, secure, easy, and convenient.

WHY SHOULD I USE myEoffering?

Many of you already pay for most of your purchases electronically, whether online or with a credit or debit card. So we have decided to offer this service as a convenience to you - you can stop writing checks or having to remember to bring cash every Sunday. Simply log in to our service and set up your offering. You can set the donations to match your pay periods, and even send your one-time donations to the special offerings we may have from time-to-time. This new service allows you to give any amount, at any time, from home or on the road, with your computer or even your mobile device. Now you can control how and when you give your tithes.

HOW DOES IT HELP?

Online giving is the future. In the lifetime of our young people, we will see electronic payments overshadow traditional methods of paper payments. In order to position ourselves to continue doing the work of God in the future and to make it as convenient as possible to be a cheerful giver to God's work, we have decided to offer online giving to you. In addition to easier access to giving and more engagement with young stewards, online offering has many benefits for the church. It allows us to more easily track contributions for budgeting. It saves us from manually tracking those contributions every week. It saves us from large fees on check processing and allows us to more accurately forecast expenditures and needs.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Signing up is as simple as going to our church website listed above and look for the green computer mouse icon. That button will take you to the myEoffering page for our church. Simply sign up and begin giving online today! Or scan the code to the right with your mobile device to get started now.



SCAN THIS
CODE WITH
YOUR MOBILE
DEVICE NOW





WE REMEMBER in our prayers:

O God, you are the hope of every generation. We give you thanks for the elderly, frail, or those in need of care in our midst, who point us to your faithfulness. With your healing presence touch the lives of all who are sick or sorrowful, that they may know the comfort and consolation of your Holy Spirit. Especially we pray for:

Craig Elias; Andy Kelemen; Dagmar Gerst; Linda Larkin; Jennifer Meyer, Anne Bidlack, Amy Stabenow

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES for the February issue of the *Voice* are to be submitted by **Sunday, January 11th**. Articles may be left in the church office or email: mtleboluth@aol.com.

The 2024 Altar Flower and Worship Bulletin Donation Charts



We still have open Sundays for those who wish to sign up for altar flowers or worship bulletins for the 2018 season. [Please, if the date wanted is taken, select another date!] Some dates have evening liturgies and some dates are for midweek liturgies. The cost of donation is \$30.00 per vase for flowers and \$25.00 per Sunday or Holy Day for bulletins. Please submit to the Church Office one week before any acknowledgement you would like printed. No reminders are sent for payment; we count on everybody to be good stewards.



PROJECT PRAY FOR PEACE

-Starting December 17th

Pray for peace in Ukraine and in the Middle East.



Sign your name on A DOVE- Post your dove ON THE BULLETIN BOARD. Sample PEACE PRAYER CARDS available. Display located in the Foyer Café

A Note from the Treasurer:

For many members, the e-offering platform has been a useful tool and we thank you for using it. This is a reminder that if you use your bank account directly, the fee is 30 cents. If you use a credit card, the fee is 3.25%. Please use the bank account direct debit if at all possible.

*You're Invited...To the
Sunday Morning Fellowship*

Each Sunday worshippers have the opportunity to greet one another and welcome visitors at our: **Sunday Morning Fellowship** in the Foyer. Join us in between the early and late Liturgies to share greetings and conversations with friends and visitors. Refreshments are available for all.

The Sunday Morning Fellowship also provides opportunities to volunteer:

- *Sponsor the Coffee Project of Lutheran World Relief, helping small growers, their families and communities through the fair trade of coffee.
- *Volunteer to set up and clean the Fellowship refreshments table. It's easy to do and a member of the Hospitality Committee will show you how. Also, written instructions are available.
- *Provide sweet (or healthy) treats for all to enjoy. (Gluten free and nut free treats are also welcomed)

If you'd like to help you can sign up in the foyer or contact the church office to reserve a day.

Annual Stewardship... There is still time to review and return your Time and Talent sheets. Also, there are still some 2024 offering envelopes are available for pick up in the Narthex.

JUBILATE DEO
Shout joyfully to God,
all the earth, sing a psalm
to the glory of his name
ALLELUIA

2024 Congregational Council Officers elected at October 22 Annual Meeting



Our 2024 Congregational Council begins its year of service this month. They are: They are: Julia Nelson (Youth); Rick Spickard (Finance); and Tom Ultsch (Property); Cindy Brown (Worship), Jim Needles (Stewardship), James Brentzel (Evangelism) Sara Dougherty (Social Ministries), Patrick Snyder (Property), Jody Lutz (President), David Hale (Vice President), Melodie Frankovitch (Educational Ministries), Jeff McGraw (Congregational Life) , and Amy Stabenow (Secretary)

Thanks our outgoing council members, Alan Trivilino, Don Snyder, and Vedette Keplar for sharing their time and talents. We offer heartfelt thanks for their leadership.

The Congregational Council is constituted in order to provide a partnership with the pastor in the ministry of the Gospel. This Congregational Council will be installed in January. Council members who do not serve as officers will serve as liaisons for the Standing Committees of council.



A Prayer for New Days Ahead

Heavenly Father, thank You for making all things new! As another new year begins, help us live each day for You. May we continually have a new song in our hearts to sing to You, no matter what comes our way. We trust in You because we know Your mercies are new every morning, and your blessings are plentiful. Thank you for everything. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAILY BREAD MEAL...



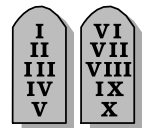
Our next meal at the Daily Bread Ministries is Sunday, January 21, 2024. We will be serving approximately 150 individuals Turkey Tetrazzini, vegetable, fruit, roll and a dessert.

Sign up sheets in the Narthex for both serving the meal on 1/21 at 2:00 pm. and for Prepping the meal on Friday, 1/19 at 9:00 am.

MONETARY DONATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED.

Thank you in advance for your support of this mission of our congregation. The individuals who receive these meals truly appreciate this care.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



- 1 You shall have no other gods.
- 2 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.
- 3 Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.
- 4 Honor your father and your mother.
- 5 You shall not murder.
- 6 You shall not commit adultery.
- 7 You shall not steal..
- 8 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 9 You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
- 10 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or don key, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Advent Pageant Thanks

Congrats to the cast and crew of our wonderful Advent Pageant! The children did a great job as they shared the Nativity story in *“The Christmas Story: Jesus Christ is the Same—Yesterday, Today and Forever”* written by Kendra Smiley and adapted by Elizabeth Scales Rheinfrank.

Congrats to our talented cast of actors and singers: Liliana & Samantha Croom, Leo Bucher, Annabelle & Grant Kegel, Madelyn Nichols, Austin & Cole Porter, Taylor Larson, Tatum Tomnay; and to our teens portraying Wisemen: Claire Bruno & Max Bruno & Fin Darcy.

Many thanks to our Director Elizabeth Scales Rheinfrank; Music Directors: Carol Vogeley & Barb Heagy; Production Assistant Mary Beth Trivilino; Backstage Assistants: Milo Bucher, Luke Frankovitch, and Jen Cercone; Teen Assistants: Max & Claire Bruno, and Mackenna Cercone; and to our Educational Ministries Chairperson Melodie Frankovitch, who also organized/planned the Pageant and produced the Program.

Many thanks to the Croom, Bucher, Kegel-Lehman, Nichols, Larson, Porter, and Petursson families for participating in and helping with the Pageant and rehearsals.

Thanks to Jim Needles for microphones, Kris Malia for office support, Tom Ultsch & Don Snyder for custodial support, and Pastor Heagy for spiritual leadership. Thanks also to Sara Dougherty, Deb Hazlett and Melodie Frankovitch for the Service Craft Project with the kids during rehearsals. For the delicious Advent Luncheon, thanks go to Jeff & Sharon McGraw; Tom Ultsch; Debbie, Jody & Chase Lutz; Melodie, Matt & Luke Frankovitch; and to all the Congregational Life volunteers.

Thanks also to our Sunday School Teachers: Lizzy Koval, Jessica Porter, Claire Bruno, & Mary Beth Trivilino; and to all the Education volunteers for their continued dedication throughout the year!

Sunday School Resumes January 7

Join us for Sunday School each week at 10:00 resuming January 7. On that day we will celebrate the Baptism of Jesus in Sunday School and in Worship. Be sure to join us for this festive Worship Liturgy and Lesson!

We look forward to having your kids in Sunday School each week! Students follow the Whirl Lectionary-based curriculum with Bible lessons corresponding with those in heard in Worship.

Teachers include Lizzy Koval, Jessica Porter, Claire Bruno, and Mary Beth Trivilino, who also serves as our Sunday School Director. We are looking for a few volunteers to substitute in Sunday School occasionally in the Pre-K/Kindergarten and Elementary classes. Please contact MBTrivilino@verizon.net for more information.

THANK YOU

The Congregational Life Committee was pleased to prepare and serve the luncheon during the Advent Pageant coordinated by Educational Ministries.

Thank you to Sharon and Jeff McGraw who graciously provided their time to prepare the meal and to all who assisted with the set-up, serving, and clean-up.

Especially Debbie Lutz, Tom Ultsch, and Melodie Frankovitch.



Christmas Tree Recycling

When it is sadly time to take down your tree, there are many options to find new life for this beautiful symbol of Christmas and keep it out of the landfill. Many municipalities in our area have a recycling plan for their communities' trees. The trees are either chipped into mulch by the municipalities and used to beautify community parks, or placed in natural areas to provide wildlife habitat.

Thank you for being good stewards of God's creation.

Please see below for recycling options in your area:

Mt. Lebanon

Christmas trees will be picked up curbside for recycling by Mt. Lebanon Public Works the day BEFORE your regular trash day during the weeks of January 8 and January 15, 2024. Please have your tree at the curb the night before either collection date.

Bethel Park

Jan 10, 2022 All Day

Residents looking to dispose of their Christmas trees are instructed to place them at the curb for pick-up on Monday, January 10th for recycling. Christmas trees placed at the curb prior to January 10th will not be picked-up until the designated recycling day.

Peters Township

Christmas Tree Disposal - Two Options

1 - Recycle your tree by dropping it off in Peterswood Park at the Baseball Fields Parking Area (Behind the outfield of Field #2). Drop off your tree anytime between December 27, 2023 and Monday, January 15,

2024. Trees will be converted to pine mulch. There are signs directing where to drop off the trees.

2 - Place your tree out for curbside garbage collection the week of January 2nd - January 5th. Christmas trees are considered a bulk item, and bulk item collection is the first full week of each month.

Please have all items and decorations removed from the tree prior to disposal.

Upper St Clair

Undecorated Christmas trees may be dropped off at the small parking lot across from the Public Works building on Truxton Drive between Dec. 26, 2022, to Jan. 31, 2023.

Castle Shannon

No Christmas tree recycle program

Pittsburgh

The Allegheny County Parks Department is offering its annual Christmas Tree Recycling Program this holiday season.

Residents may drop off Christmas trees from **Tuesday, December 26, 2023, through Sunday, January 14, 2024**, at all nine county parks from 8:00 am until dusk.

All lights, decorations, tinsel and stands must be removed from trees prior to drop-off. Trees will be mulched and used in the county parks.

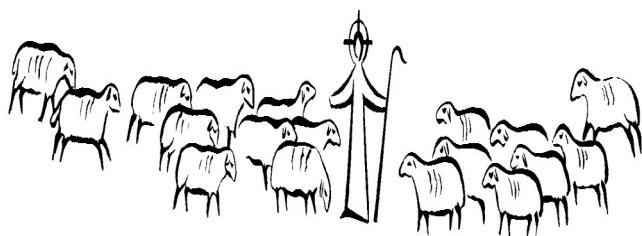
Park	Drop-Off Location
Boyce Park	Soccer Fields Parking Lot
Deer Lakes Park	Veterans Shelter Parking Lot
Harrison Hills Park	Parking Lot at Chipmunk Drive & Cottontail Drive
Hartwood Acres Park	Middle Road Parking Lot
North Park	Swimming Pool Parking Lot
Round Hill Park	Alfalfa Shelter Parking Lot
Settlers Cabin Park	Wave Pool Parking Lot
South Park	Wave Pool Parking Lot
White Oak Park	Wedding Garden Parking Lot

During the 2022-2023 program, over 3,000 trees were received and recycled, with the resulting mulch used for various purposes throughout the park system's 12,000+ acres.

Christmas flowers, wreaths and trees will be removed from the Sanctuary on Saturday, 1/6, starting at 10 am. Help is appreciated! If you would to take home your ordered poinsettias or any of the extras, please pick up January 1 through January 7 from the table in the corridor.

Blanket Tying event

Our 7th annual Blanket tying event for Daily Bread Ministries will take place on Sunday, January 14 at 11:15 right after the late service in the social hall. We will once again be working side by side with our Bhutanese friends. Please put this date on your calendar as we work on this important mission to make blankets for our homeless friends on the northside. The warmth will be greatly appreciated!



While shopping....

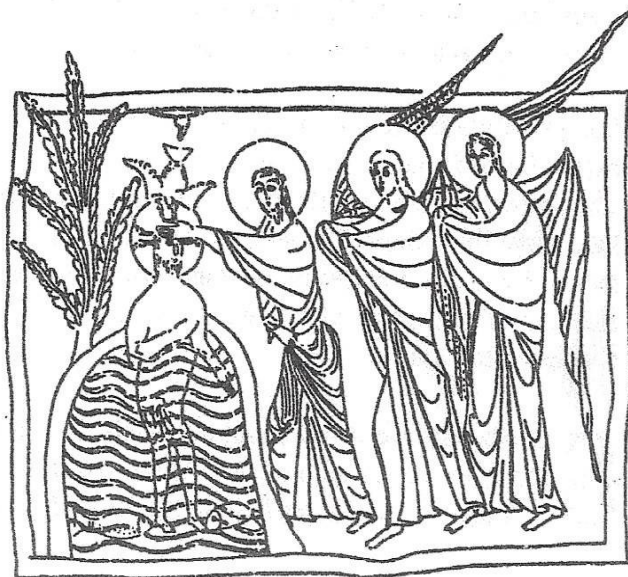
Please continue to remember the ministry of the Food Bank at St. Michael and All Angels' with your contributions of non-perishable food, cleaning and laundry products and monetary donations. When making monetary donations, please make your check payable to *Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church* and designate your donation for St. Michael's Food Pantry [Your donation will be recorded and then forwarded.] or to the ELCA World Hunger ministries using a *designated gift envelope* in your pew. Thank you.

The Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, January 7th

The teachers of the early church emphasized Jesus' baptism, seeing it as a revelation of Jesus' divine sonship, the anointing and appointment of Jesus to his messianic office at the beginning of his public ministry, a declaration of Jesus' solidarity with the sinful human race in undergoing baptism by John, and a baptism of the water to give the element power to cleanse from sin. [Philip Pfatteicher; *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship*, Augsburg Fortress, p. 217.]

The Baptism of our Lord, always celebrated the First Sunday after the Epiphany, is an expression of the joy of the Epiphany of our Lord. In fact it serves as a further "manifestation" of the identity of Jesus.

Along with the Easter Vigil and Pentecost, this festival day is one of the traditional times of the church for baptism, because of its symbolic nature.



Looking ahead

Ash Wednesday - February 14
Easter - March 31

Angel Tree

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our congregation, 75 gifts were delivered to Glade Run Lutheran Services in December. Also, the youth group purchased \$250 of additional gifts for the kids through a grant from Thrivent. All was greatly appreciated by our friends at Glade Run!

"I MYSELF AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. NO ONE WHO COMES TO ME SHALL EVER BE HUNGRY, NO ONE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL EVER THIRST."

JOHN 6:35



Daily Bread Outreach Meal 2024

January 21, 2024

This month we are making Turkey Tetrazzini with a vegetable, fruit and dessert.

The menus and sign up sheets for the Daily Bread Meals will become available prior to each month in the Voice newsletter and in the Narthex. Monetary donations are always being accepted. Thanks for your generosity. *The meal dates for the remaining months of the year will appear in the February newsletter.*

GLOBAL LINKS
Sharing Surplus. Saving Lives.

Global Links 2024

Thanks to all who volunteered numerous hours to make our Global Links ministry a success in 2023. Due to the high interest in this volunteer event, we have added additional dates for 2024. Below are the dates-hopefully we will see some new faces next year as we pack and prepare much-needed medical supplies for needy countries.

Wednesdays from 1-3pm:

[February 7](#)

[March 6](#)

[April 10](#)

[May 8](#)

[June 5](#)

[July 10](#)

[August 7](#)

[September 11](#)

[October 9](#)

[November 6](#)

[December 11](#)

Saturdays from 10-12pm

[Saturday, March 23 from 10-12pm](#)

[Saturday, June 22 from 10-12pm](#)

[Saturday, August 24 from 10-12pm](#)

[Saturday, November 23 from 10-12pm](#)



THE CALENDAR OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

January is the first month of the secular calendar. The rhythm of life for most is attuned to this calendar. For Christians, the church calendar is our beat. Our new year begins before January (typically in late November). What follows is a summary of the Christian calendar, the rhythm of our faith.

The Christian calendar is made up of six seasons: **Advent, Christmas, the Season after Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and the Season after Pentecost.** The seasons after Epiphany and Pentecost are known as 'Ordinary Time'. The number of Sundays in Advent, Lent, and Easter remain the same every year; the number of Sundays after Christmas (December 25), Epiphany (January 6), and Pentecost varies. The last Sunday of the Christian calendar year is called *Christ the King*, followed by *Advent*, always the first season of our new year. The Sunday called *Transfiguration of the Lord* ends the season after Epiphany and is followed by *Ash Wednesday*, the beginning of Lent. *Ascension* falls 40 days after Easter; *Pentecost*, 50. Learning the beat of Christian life comes in part by recognizing the special Sundays that mark the ending of one season, preparing us for the new.

A few dates on the church calendar deserve mention, though they're mainly known to worshippers who fully follow the sacred rhythm. *Baptism of the Lord* falls on the first Sunday after Epiphany, which means it takes place before mid-January. On this Sunday, we remember Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Our congregation now has a custom of receiving sea shells on this day for which to remember our baptism into Jesus Christ. *Palm/Passion Sunday* occurs a week before Easter and marks our entrance into Holy Week. On this Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem riding a donkey; then we hear the story of his brutal passion. In one liturgy, therefore, praise of Jesus turns into a call for his execution. We face up to our sin, which made necessary Jesus' atoning death. The *Easter Vigil*, the oldest liturgy of Christian faith, takes place on the Saturday night before Easter and, when properly celebrated, continues after midnight, serving as the first Easter worship.

Most are unaware that *Easter Vigil* and *Easter* itself are primarily about Holy Baptism, the time when newly professing Christians are baptized into the faith. Rounding out this summary, mention should be made of *All Saints*, celebrated on November 1 or the first Sunday of November. Departed loved ones in the faith are remembered on this day. Finally, there are other festival days, which are listed on pages 54-63 in our hymnals, including the option for *Name of Jesus* on January 1. Keeping these solemnities adds more rhythm to our life of faith.

The Christian calendar is the foundation of worship. The *Lectionary*, the appointed Bible readings heard in church, are often called the first floor. The *Lectionary* unites Christians throughout the world. Thanks for reading this article to the very end! --Pastor Heagy

Tax Reform Act May Make QCD's More Appealing

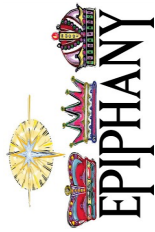
Several years ago, Qualified Charitable Distributions became an option for IRA holders, who are at least 70 ½, to donate directly to qualified charities. This has several possible good tax outcomes for the IRA holder. In cases where the taxpayer is taking the standard deduction, direct contribution will keep the IRA distribution out of taxable income, lowering taxes if you do not itemize. This also reduces Adjusted Gross Income that may reduce taxes on Social Security benefits and reduce the taxpayer's Medicare premiums.

While nothing changed in 2023 as far as these rules, the near doubling of the standard deduction makes it more likely that taxpayer's will be taking the standard deduction. Taking an IRA distribution that goes into taxable income may not be offset by an itemized deduction for charitable contributions, increasing taxes. In short, contributions to MLULC (or other charities) may be more tax effective if donated directly from an IRA to the charity rather than being distributed to the taxpayer and then contributed to the charity.

If this is of possible interest to you, please contact me. I can explain further and give you account information for our brokerage account that can accept QCD's.





Dave Lendt, Treasurer





JANUARY 2024



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OFFICE CLOSED Happy New Year !	2	3	4 10:00 Bible Studies 4:30 Catechetics 2	5	6 10:00 Sanctuary Clean-up 
7 Baptism of Our Lord 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School 	8 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 pm Bible Studies 7:00 ESL	9 4:30 Catechetics 1	10 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 Choir	11 10:00 Bible Studies 4:30 Catechetics 2	12	13
14 Epiphany 2 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School <i>Voice Articles Due</i>	15 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 pm Bible Studies 7:30 ESL	16 4:30 Catechetics 1	17 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 Choir	18 10:00 Bible Studies 4:30 Catechetics 2	19	20
21 Epiphany 3 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School 2:00 Daily Bread Meal	22 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 pm Bible Studies 7:00 ESL	23 4:30 Catechetics 1	24 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 Choir	25 10:00 Bible Studies 4:30 Catechetics 2	26	27
28 Epiphany 4 8:30 & 10:00 Worship 8:30 Live Virtual Worship 10:00 Sunday School 11:15 Council Meeting	29 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 pm Bible Studies 7:00 ESL	30 4:30 Catechetics 1	31 12:30-2:30 ESL 7:00 Choir 			





1 Give thanks and praise to God, for we have been redeemed through the undeserved gift and sacrifice of Jesus Christ that liberates us from darkness, hopelessness and bondage to sin.

2 Pray without ceasing for an end to the conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Middle East, Ukraine, South Sudan and other countries. Ask God to make us instruments of peace, reconciliation and justice in the world wherever there is turmoil and suffering. Pray for the vital work we do together through Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran World Federation, Church World Service and other partners.

3 "Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!" (Psalm 148:7-8). Pray for the Spirit to stir our sense of awe for all that God has created and for God's boundless love for humankind.

4 *Human Trafficking Prevention Month* Pray that we will work together diligently to prevent sexual slavery, forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, including online forms of trafficking. Pray for our communities of faith to be safe places of refuge, respect, care and support for victims and survivors of human trafficking, especially young people of all genders and gender identities.

5 Give thanks that God leads us to the light and truth of Jesus Christ — God's Son, the promised Messiah — when we might wander aimlessly in despair, longing and chaos.

6 Last year there were over 40,000 gun deaths in our country, including suicides (gunviolencearchive.org). Pray for an end to these senseless deaths and the resulting trauma, grief and anguish that spread through our communities and nation. Ask God to lead us out of hopelessness and inaction and to renew our commitment to end gun violence.

7 *Baptism of Our Lord* Let us give thanks for our baptisms, which marked us as loved and forgiven children of God and welcomed us to a life revitalized and guided by the Spirit. That same Spirit descended upon Jesus during his baptism and accompanied him throughout his life on earth.

8 Pray for the 340 new-start congregations and communities of faith under development in the United States and the Caribbean region, which welcome all God's people, share Christ's love and provide spiritual and physical sustenance.

9 What would happen if we awoke and greeted each day with this prayer and invitation to God: "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth" (Psalm 25:4-5).

10 Remember and give thanks for our siblings in Christ who have gone before us, and for those living among us today who help reveal the mysteries of God's grace and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

11 Thank God for the ELCA's special relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a full communion partner since 1997. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that together we will find strength and resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.

12 Lift up prayers for our neighbors and siblings in Christ who suffer poverty and hunger, oppression and violence, and who are alone and without advocates. Pray that we will look to God to deepen our understanding of justice and peacemaking and to guide our relationships with our neighbors in need.

13 Pray for the ELCA's Future Church: God's Love Made Real initiative, which aspires to a welcoming, thriving, connected, sustainable church and envisions a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

14 Pray that we will respond daily to Jesus' invitation to follow him and will learn, serve our neighbors in need, share the gospel and invite others to experience God's love, forgiveness and truth in community.

15 *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* Give thanks and praise for siblings in Christ, such as Martin Luther King Jr., who risk everything to proclaim God's love and concern for all, stress the inherent value of our neighbors as children of God and awaken us from indifference, inactivity and hesitation to do God's difficult work in the world.

16 "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well" (Psalm 139:14). When we doubt ourselves and question our value, remember and give thanks that God created us and knows us inside out, including our quirks, gifts, needs, questions and complexities.

17 Pray for youth and family ministry leaders and volunteers gathering for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza 2024 in New Orleans, that the Spirit will renew their faith, affirm their gifts and equip them to surround young people with God's grace and mercy.

18 Ask God to renew and strengthen our resolve to end hunger and poverty and to address their root causes in our communities and the world. Promise to listen carefully to our neighbors in need so that we can work together to find appropriate, effective and sustainable solutions.

19 When we are united with Christ, every aspect of our life and being — spiritual, physical and social — is impacted. Pray for the Spirit to help us stay faithful to the ways of God and the example of Christ and to reclaim us when we give undue value and attention to things that distract us.

20 Remember in prayer individuals and families who are homeless. Pray for congregations, community ministries, social service organizations and local and state governments that are working to develop effective, creative and sustainable housing, shelter and care for our neighbors.

21 Jesus Christ *is* the good news of God's grace and mercy at the heart of our baptism and faith. Give thanks and praise God for this amazing promise and gift!

22 Pray for Lutheran outdoor ministry leaders as they recruit young adult staff for summer ministries. Pray that young adults will respond to these leaders' invitation to share their faith, gifts and leadership abilities with campers of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

23 There's a bit of Jonah in all of us when we question God's wisdom and mercy and balk at doing what God asks of us. Promise to be attentive and responsive to God's work and to trust that God's boundless love and forgiveness are for all people, including ourselves.

24 Give thanks for the ELCA Foundation, which helps us to fund God's work in the world, now and well into the future.

25 *Conversion of Paul* Give thanks for God's presence in our lives and for the work of the Holy Spirit, which changes our lives and the world.

26 Pray for the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, a diverse group of sisters in Christ who courageously proclaim the gospel, work for justice and healing, and serve all people.

27 *Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith* Pray that when we share the story of God's love and activity in the world, we will remember women in the Bible who professed their faith in God, served as leaders in the church, shared the good news of Jesus Christ and cared for neighbors in need.

28 Praise God that Jesus was born human and knows what our life entails, and that Jesus is the Son of God, revealing the immeasurable power, love and mercy of our Creator.

29 Remember in prayer those who serve in law enforcement in our communities and nation. Give thanks for the many ways they care for our well-being. Pray for their safety and ask the Spirit to nurture their wisdom, compassion and impartial judgment in the exercise of their responsibilities.

30 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Psalm 111:10). Give thanks that, in this verse, fear isn't something negative, threatening or worrisome but instead means awe and respect for God and God's ways, which enable us to practice wisdom, compassion and justice throughout life.

31 Pray for leaders and organizations gathered at the Lutheran Services in America Disability Network Winter Meeting in Phoenix, that the Spirit will inspire and guide their work as they empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to lead their best lives in society, the church and the world.

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Senior Pastor

Dr. Christopher Keenan, DMA

Director of Music and Organist

Mr. Larry Allen

Director of Music and Organist Emeritus

Mrs. Kris Malia

Parish Secretary

**YOU CROWN THE YEAR WITH YOUR GOODNESS,
AND YOUR PATHS OVERFLOW WITH PLENTY.**

PSALM 65:11

HAPPY NEW YEAR

2024



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Baptism of our Lord

to be observed and celebrated

Sunday, January 7, 2024

All who attend church on this day will receive a seashell for which
to remember their baptism into Jesus Christ.

8:30 AM & 10:00 AM



In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 1:9-11