



# ST. MARK'S MESSENGER

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January 2026  
Valley, Nebraska  
[www.StMarksValleyNE.com](http://www.StMarksValleyNE.com)  
402.359.2315



## *Epiphany and the Chalking of the Door—* What is it? And, is it “Lutheran”?

In this article I hope to educate you a little bit about the day of Epiphany in our church year and give you a little ‘do it yourself’ project and prayer to do at home with your family. I am introducing all of us to this ritual because it is a pretty nice way to integrate our faith and church life into our daily family life and to teach children (and us!) about Epiphany. This is, of course, NOT a mandatory practice but one which is an old practice of Christians around Epiphany.

The Wise Men are celebrated at Epiphany for their journey to find Jesus and his family and to bring them gifts for the newborn king. These ‘wise men’ or magi are considered the first Gentiles to recognize and worship Jesus as a king. Tradition says that there were three of them, but we don’t know that for sure. Neither do we know their names, but long tradition has given them the names of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar.

So, you may ask, what does all of this have to do with ‘chalking a door’? The chalking of our door is the asking of a blessing for our home and all who will go in and out through our door this year. As the Magi were visitors to the place where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived, so we ask for God’s blessing on our family, our visitors and our home at this beginning of a new year.

Of course this is **not** a required practice, nor is this ordered in the Bible, but it is a way of letting people know about our faith, about who is the Lord of our dwelling, and it can start a conversation about that.

On the Night or Day on which we chalk the door, we may invite the family to be there and to take part. Turns can be taken with each person adding **numbers**, or a ‘+’ or a **letter**. Here is what is written and it changes with each new year:

**20 + C + M + B + 26**

Here is what all of this stands for! The numbers 20 and 26 that bookend the chalked crosses and letters are, of course, this **year**. The beginning and the end. It is like asking that God bless us and our home for the entire year ahead. The letters have **2** meanings. The **C**, **M**, and **B** are the first letters of the three Magi who visited the holy family. They also stand for three Latin words which are—, *Christus, Mansionum Benedicat* which means—Christ Bless this House. The plus signs stand for the cross of Christ (Christus). Mansionum means house, and benedicat means to bless.

**I think that any time a family gathers in prayer to ask for God’s blessing and there is a traditional act and ritual associated with it—it helps that prayer and blessing to be anchored into our memories—and that’s a good thing.**

Don't get too worried about doing it right! Get some chalk, gather the family, give a quick explanation, gather hands and pray. Put the chalk writing on the lintel of the door, or at the top of the door. I have even seen it done on the inside of the door as well.

Remember-perfection is not the point! This simply gives us another touchpoint, another way in which we can teach neighbors, visitors or grandchildren about Jesus being the light and blessing of our lives and how we live out different church seasons in our regular lives. It is also a physical reminder of our prayer to God for blessing and protection.

Some people choose to do this on Twelfth Night—which is the last night of Christmas—January 5<sup>th</sup>. Others do their door chalking and blessing on Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>. And still others do it *near* the time of Epiphany. When it is done is not as important as the family's witness and the linking of hands in prayer asking for God's protection and blessing.

So...get yourself some chalk. I don't think color matters. Some folks may have sidewalk chalk at hand, but any kind of chalk is alright. If you would like to pray extemporaneously to ask God for God's protection and blessing on your home and your family—feel free to do that. If you are less comfortable with that, here is a blessing I wrote that you may use:

*Let us pray: Lord Jesus, you are the door to the kingdom of God, the gate to life eternal. May we never forget that. We give you thanks for this, our home. We humbly ask that you would bless and protect us, our home, and all who come and go through these doors throughout this year. May visitors always find welcome, faith, love, joy, laughter, hospitality and forgiveness inside these walls. Open the door to all things that will enrich our lives and faith, and close the door to all that would harm us. May you Lord, bless our going out and our coming in from this time forth and for evermore. And finally, O Lord, when the time comes, lead us to our heavenly home through you, to you, and with you, forever and ever. Amen.*

You may close by making the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads, or you may cross yourself if that seems best.

Do not feel that you need to re-chalk the door as the chalk fades—it is meant to fade, as the blessing deepens into the door and house and people inside.

I pray that this little ritual will bless you and your family, and that it can be a witness to the faith of those who reside in your home, and a conversation starter for those who visit. I pray that we and our homes will reflect the presence of Christ, his love and blessing. It might even be a warning! You cannot enter this house without being blessed!!

A blessed New Year and Epiphany season to you all!

Serving Christ with you,  
Pastor Barbara

*from the PMA...*

### **The Portal**

One current topic that has our community and congregation buzzing is the sports portal. This enables athletes to change schools/teams. I'm not fully versed in this process but there seems to be a lot of speculation on why an athlete who was awarded a scholarship by a school would then reject that scholarship and place on the team to go somewhere else? When considering the incentive to do so, most people seem to think it is the money that is offered by the bidding schools for the athlete or the opportunity to compete at a different level. I assume all decisions by the athlete have the goal of a better future.

With this in mind, a friend posed a question to me today. What if such a portal existed for the apostles in New Testament time? What would be their lobbying chip? Probably not money as they did not receive a salary but existed at the mercy of the believers they served. Athletes enter their portal by their choice. The apostles did not pursue their call. Jesus was the recruiter for them. And as for their location, I don't believe they had any input as to where they were sent. The destination of their mission was

assigned by God. I do believe the one thing the apostles have in common with the athletes is the desire to act toward a future goal. The athlete pursues an education, an income and excellence in their sport. The apostle pursues eternal life. Not a bad goal.

PMA Karen



Quilting days in January will be on Monday , Jan. 12 and Thursday , Jan. 22. If you can tie a knot, you qualify! Our time is 1 p.m. -3:30 p.m.

Visit our website at [www.stmarksvalley.com](http://www.stmarksvalley.com)  
Cell Numbers: Pastor Barbara Oshlo – 202-5495  
Jan Reis – 490-2330



## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

**Council did not meet in December.**

### **A PRAYER FOR ST MARK'S COUNCIL**

Lord, by your Spirit, build our council together around a common mission to expand faith in all the communities touched by St. Mark's.  
Amen.

## **JANUARY NEWS FOR WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S**

### **FAITH CIRCLE NEWS**

Faith Circle will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026 at church for our first meeting of the new year. Karen Authier is the leader of our study, Chapter 3 of our book. Deb Mumm will be our hostess. We invite you to join our women's group for fun and fellowship.

### **FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE NEWS**

### **JOY/PEACE CIRCLE NEWS**



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From Laughing with Lutherans

My daughter Janie, 5, repeated the Christmas story she learned at Sunday school. When asked what gifts the wisemen brought she said, "Gold, myrrh and 50 cents."

**You're never without hope,  
because you're never without  
prayer.**

### **Birthdays in January**



It has been requested to have personal birthdates put in the newsletter. If we are going to do this we need you to be sure that we have your birth date.

Please let the church office know your date if you have not already done so.

#### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING"**

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 – Danette Samson    | 21 – Robert Oshlo     |
| 2 – Lane Wittgren     | 21 – Paul Glidden     |
| 3 – Kami Herrington   | 21 – Kristi Trost     |
| 5 – Douglas Larson    | 22 – Pam Cherny       |
| 5 – Lane Eggen        | 22 – Easton Hurt      |
| 6 – Jennifer Kerwin   | 23 – Lily Pryor       |
| 8 – Emily Kahlandt    | 24 – Isaiah Gutierrez |
| 10 – Tyson Lewis      | 25 – Debbie Mumm      |
| 11 – Melaney Franklin | 25 – Amber Bakken     |
| 14 – Sarah Hayden     | 26 – Kenzie Trost     |
| 14 – Amy Lewis        | 27 – Donna Hovendick  |
| 16 – Nicole Karloff   | 27 – Michele Hemphill |
| 16 – Erin Mahaffey    | 27 – Howard Renshaw   |
| 18 – Vicki Boardman   | 30 – Kris Pryor       |
| 18 – Ameri Ueckert    | 31 – Bailey Lathrop   |

## SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAYS IN JANUARY 2026

January 4

Second Sunday of Christmas

First Reading	Jeremiah 31:7-14
Responsive Reading	Psalms 147:12-20
Second Reading	Ephesians 1:3-14
Gospel Reading	John 1:[1-9] 10-18

January 11

Baptism of Our Lord

First Reading	Isaiah 42:1-9
Responsive Reading	Psalms 29
Second Reading	Acts 10:34-43
Gospel Reading	Matthew 3:13-17

January 18

Second Sunday after Epiphany

First Reading	Isaiah 49:1-7
Responsive Reading	Psalms 40:1-11
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Gospel Reading	John 1:29-42

January 25

Third Sunday after Epiphany

First Reading	Isaiah 9:1-4
Responsive Reading	Psalms 27:1, 4-9
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Gospel Reading	Matthew 4:12-23



# Thank You

I would like to thank my St. Marks friends, Faith Circle, Sharon Renshaw for holy communion and Pastor Barbara for the telephone calls, texts, cards, holiday bakings and the many meals we received during the period following my knee replacement. I thank you so much, as does Marv. St. Marks is truly our family.

Sandy Trofholz

## AdvoCare Nugget

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide. If you feel depressed, you may feel alone, but you are not. Reach out to our congregation's AdvoCare Team for more information.



## **"WINTER DOLDRUMS" UPCOMING POTLUCK!**

Mark your calendar for a winter church potluck following worship on January 18th. If you plan on attending, please furnish a main dish (casserole, etc.), Salad, or Vegetables. Coffee, tea and dessert will be provided.

## DECEMBER MONTHLY FINANCIAL AS OF 12/31/2025

December Budget - \$23,763

December as of 12/31/2025 Expenses - \$20,406

December as of 12/31/2025 Giving - \$52,602

## YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL AS OF 12/31/2025

January – December Budget - \$291,174

January – December as of 12/31/2025 Expenses - \$271,137

January – December as of 12/31/2025 Giving - \$298,363

## PRAYER CONCERNS

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Bill & Louise	D.J.Smith	Charlotte
Gwen Rittgarn	Jake	Mitzi
Ruth	Lorrie Denker	Madison Laughlin
Cindy	Lawrence Bonacci	Eryn Hamke
Lois Schaefer	Kari	Steve Hirsh
Travis Hayes	Donovan	Pastor Jay
Pastor Harold Schmidt	Caregivers Among Us	Care Center Residents
Care Center Staff	All Those Grieving	

## ALL OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Donna Fintel	Jean Krahmer
Joan Kahlandt	MaryLou Finn
Annie Hurt	Vernabelle Adams
Millie Richards	Donna Hovendick
Julie Dunn	

For all military serving at home and around the world. We include prayers for their families as they hold things together in their absence.

**All our homebound are hungry for a call, card or visit! God bless you, as you bless them!**

## PRAYER BOX REQUEST

- For those separated from family during the holidays.
- For those grieving loved ones over the holidays.

### *First Coming*

He did not wait till the world was ready,  
till men and nations were at peace.  
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.  
He came when the need was deep and great.  
He dined with sinners in all their grime,  
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.  
In joy he came to a tarnished  
world of sin and doubt.

To a world like ours, of anguished shame  
he came, and his Light would not go out.  
He came to a world which did not mesh,  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

In the mystery of the Word made Flesh  
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,

He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

*by Madeleine L'Engle*



*Happy New year*

