

# SAINT LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Organized 1871

Celebrating 154 Years of ministry in Columbia, South Carolina

*The Mission of St. Luke's Episcopal Church is to spread the Word  
and share the love of God with all people.*

## The Magi

*Prioritizing  
Adventure over  
Comfort*

Matthew 2:1-12



## The Second Sunday after Christmas Day

The Holy Eucharist: Rite II

January 4, 2026

10:00AM

The Rev. Raphiell Ashford, Rector

Mr. Leonard Gordon, Supply Organist

## Vestry Theme for 2026

### Reset to the New Normal: The Work Continues

#### Mission Statement

The mission of St. Luke's Episcopal Church is to spread the Word and share the love of God with all.

#### Vision Statement

{To become} a vibrant self-sustaining institution that serves and respects the spiritual, social, and physical needs of our community and congregation, while preserving the history of the church.

**Quiet Please:** Please be mindful of others as you enter the church before the service. Upon entering the nave, there should be a period of quiet and reverence as many parishioners are in prayer and or meditation.

**OFFERINGS** can be made online

<https://onrealm.org/StLukesEpiscopal59532/Give>

#### QR CODE FOR GIVING



\*Use your phone to hold over the image

# Saint Luke's Episcopal Church



**It is the parish custom to observe silence prior to the start of the Eucharist.** Be thoughtful, be silent, be reverent, for this is the House of God. Before the service, speak to the Lord, during the service, let the Lord speak to you; after the service, speak to one another.

We invite you to join us as an active participant in our worship of God.

This bulletin is your guide to our worship. You will find three books in front of you that contain most of the material needed for this service; *The Book of Common Prayer [BCP]*, *The Hymnal 1982 [H]*, and *Lift Every Voice and Sing, II [L]*. [S] denotes service music which is found in the front of the hymnal.

## Prelude

✠ indicates where to make the sign of the cross

\*\*At the ringing of the bell, all stand.

## THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn in Procession H·102 "Once in Royal David's City"

*Irby*

### The Opening Acclamation

*Celebrant*

Bless-ed be God: Father, Son, and Ho - ly Spi - rit.

*People*

And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ev - er. A-men.

✠ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## The Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Gloria S·280

Robert Powell

## The Salutation

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And with thy spirit.

Celebrant Let us pray.

## The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

\**The people sit.*

## The Lesson

### Jeremiah 31:7-14

Lector A reading from the Book of Jeremiah

Thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel." See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness

of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

[Silence]

## Lector The Word of the Lord.

People      Thanks be to God.

## Psalm 84 *Quam dilecta!*

*\*The antiphon is sung first by the Cantor and then by all; thereafter where indicated.*

How dear to me is your  
 dwelling, O Lord of hosts!

1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts! \*

My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2 The sparrow has found her a house

and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; \*  
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God. [Antiphon]

## [Antiphon]

3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! \*  
they will always be praising you.

4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! \*  
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way. **[Antiphon]**

A 5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, \*  
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

A 6 They will climb from height to height, \*  
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

B 7 LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; \*  
hearken, O God of Jacob. **[Antiphon]**

8 Behold our defender, O God; \*  
and look upon the face of your Anointed. **[Antiphon]**

## The Epistle

## Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

Lector: A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

[Silence]

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

## The Sequence Hymn H·124

## "What Star Is This with Beams So Bright?"

Puer nobis

## The Gospel Acclamation

*\*Sung first by the Cantor; then by all.*

Tony Alonzo

Refrain based on *Besançon*, French Carol

"We saw the star at its rising,  
and have come and have come to do him homage." (*Mt. 2:2*)

# The Holy Gospel

# Matthew 2:1-12

Priest    **¶** The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People    Glory to you, Lord Christ.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 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." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: '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.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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." 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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Priest    The Gospel of the Lord.

People    Praise to you, Lord Christ.

## The Sermon

The Reverend Raphiell Ashford

## The Nicene Creed

BCP 358

**¶** "and the life of the world to come. Amen"

## The Prayers of the People

Form II

BCP 385

**¶** "I ask your prayer for the departed ..."

## The Confession of Sin & Absolution

BCP 360

**¶** "pardon and deliver you from all your sins ..."

## The Peace

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And with thy spirit.

## Announcements, Birthday, & Anniversary Blessings

Fr. Raphiell+

## THE HOLY COMMUNION

### Offertory Anthem

### "Sing of Mary"

### *Pleading Savior*



1. Sing of Mar - y meek and low - ly, Vir - gin - moth - er  
2. Sing of Je - sus, son of Mar - y, In - the home at  
3. Glo - ry be to God the Fa - ther; Glo - ry be to



pure and mild, Sing of God's own Son most ho - ly,  
Naz - a - reth. Toil and la - bor can - not wea - ry  
God the Son; Glo - ry be to God the Spir - it;



Who be - came her lit - tle child. Fair - est child of  
Love en - dur - ing un - to death. Con - stant was the  
Glo - ry to the Three in One. From the heart of



fair - est moth - er, God the Lord who came to earth,  
love he gave her, Though he went forth from her side,  
bless - ed Mar - y, From all saints the song as - cends,



Word made flesh, our ver - - y broth - - er,  
Forth to preach, and heal, - and suf - - fer,  
And the church the strain re - - ech - - oes



Takes our na - - ture by his birth.  
Till on Cal - - va - ry he died.  
Un - to earth's re - - mot - est ends.

Text: Roland F. Palmer, 1891-1985

Tune: PLEADING SAVIOR, 8 7 8 7 D; *Christian Lyre*, 1830; harm. by Richard Proulx, b.1937

Creatorex

(*Gloria Patri*)

## The Great Thanksgiving

# Eucharistic Prayer B

BCP 367

\*The people remain standing.

### *Sursum corda*

The image shows musical notation for the Sanctus, arranged in four staves. The first staff (Clef: Bass) has lyrics: "The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit." The second staff (Clef: Bass) has lyrics: "Lift up your hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord." The third staff (Clef: Bass) has lyrics: "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God." The fourth staff (Clef: Bass) has lyrics: "It is meet and right so to do." The notation uses black dots for notes and horizontal lines for stems. The word "spirit" in the first staff and "Lord" in the second staff are underlined.

\*The Celebrant proceeds

\*A Proper Preface is sung or said on all Sundays; and on other occasions as appointed.

## *Sanctus et Benedictus*

Setting: from *Deutsche Messe*

Franz Schubert

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and  
might. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,  
God of pow'r and might. Heav - en and earth are  
full, full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the  
high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the  
high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

✠ “Blessed is he ...”

\*After the *Sanctus*, the people kneel or stand.

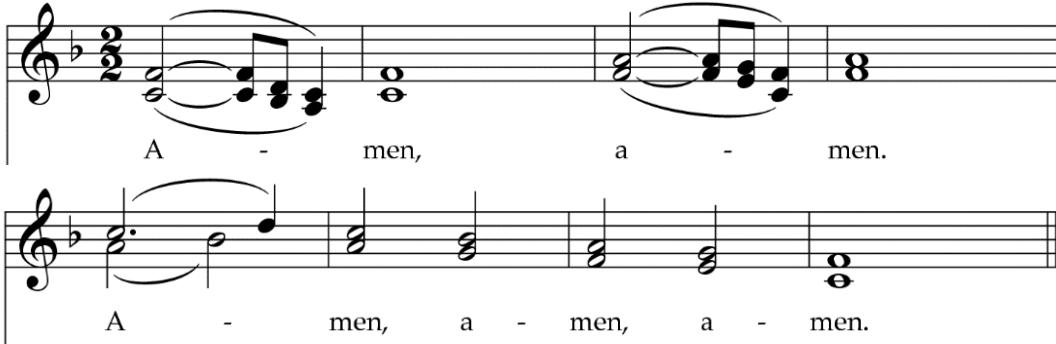
# The Prayer of Consecration

BCP 369

✠ “Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice ...”

## The Great Amen

\*The Priest sings the first “Amen.”



A - men, a - men, a - men.

A - men, a - men, a - men.

## The Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*) S. 119

Plainsong

\*The priest intones the *Pater Noster*.



Our Fa - ther, who art in hea - ven, hal - low - ed  
be thy Name, thy king - dom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in hea - ven. Give us this day our  
dai - ly bread. And for - give us our tres - pas - ses,  
as we for - give those who tres - pass a - gainst us. And lead  
us not in - to temp - ta - tion, but de - liv - er us  
from e - vil. For thine is the king - dom, and the power,  
and the glo - ry, for ev - er and ev - er. A - men.

## The Breaking of the Bread

\*A period of brief silence is kept.

## The Fraction Anthem

“O Lord, I Am not Worthy”

*Non Dignus*

\*Text can be found on the pew card and inside the back cover of *The Hymnal 1982*.

## *Agnus Dei*

Setting: from *Deutsche Messe*

Franz Schubert



have mer - cy on us.



Je - sus, Bear - er of our sins, have mer - cy on us.



Je - sus, Re-deem - er, Re - deem - er of the world,



give us your peace, give us your peace.

Priest

✠ The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

## Instructions for Receiving Communion

- All baptized persons are welcome to receive Communion, and those who do not desire to receive Communion may come to the Altar rail to receive God's blessing.
- An usher will direct you to approach the Altar for Communion or a blessing. Please kneel, if you are able, at the Altar Rail.
- To receive the consecrated bread, extend your hands upward, palms crossed and facing up.
- To receive the consecrated wine, please guide the chalice to your lips as it is offered. However, if you prefer, you may leave the consecrated bread in your palm and the Chalice bearer will intinct the host into the wine and place it on your tongue. **Please do not personally intinct the host into the chalice.**
- If you desire to receive Communion but are not able to come to the Altar rail, please notify an usher and the Priest and Chalice bearer will bring Communion to you.

## **The Music at Communion**

**H·336**

"Come with Us, O Blessed Jesus"

*Werde munter*

**H·109**

"The First Nowell"

English Carol

**L·24**

"There's A Star in the East on Christmas Morn"

Negro Spiritual

## **The Post Communion Prayer**

BCP 365

\*All kneel as able or sit.

Celebrant Let us pray.

*Celebrant and People*

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for that thou dost feed us, in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favor and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs, through hope, of thy everlasting kingdom. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

## The Christmas Blessing

May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, **✚** the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

## Hymn in Procession H•117

"Brightest and Best"

*Morning Star*

## The Dismissal

Priest      Let us go forth in the name of Christ.  
People      Thanks be to God.

## Postlude

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\*It is the custom of this parish to kneel or remain seated in prayer and reflection during the Organ Postlude. If you need to leave, please do so quietly.

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**PARISH FELLOWSHIP** is sponsored by the Evans Family.

## INTERCESSIONS



- **Parishioners:** Charles W. Blakely, Gary Bowden, John Bowden, Damion Cokley, Patricia Cokley, Gloria Eaddy, Eddie Glenn, Cynthia Goines, Robert Green, Yvonne Hall, Daryl Hammonds, Jr., Desmond Hammonds, Valencia Hammonds, Tarnez Hickman, Justin Hickmon, LaToya Hickmon, Levi Johnson, Sr., James McLemore, Mary McLemore, Marie Martin, Gwendolyn Meadows, Carmen Murray, Jay'ceon Quattlebaum, Malik Quattlebaum, Joseph Ray, Reginald Reed, Cassandra Sims, Peyton Parker-Smith, William Smith, Jr., Ronald Turner, Dorothy Walker
- **Family & Friends:** Ingrid Dowdell, Gerald L. McNair, Elsie Mitchell, Brent Johnson, Katherine Robinson, Mattie Anderson-Roberson, Theodora Washington, Tia Hicks
- **Diocesan Cycle of Prayer...** Grace Church, Anderson
- **Birthdays...** Levi "Vari" Johnson, Jr. (8<sup>th</sup>), A'Keita Hickman (10<sup>th</sup>), Desmond Hammonds (10<sup>th</sup>)
- **Anniversaries...**
- **Births...**

- Deaths...
- Traveling Mercies...

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## **SERVANTS FOR THE LORD**

### **The Old Testament Lector**

Joni James

### **The Gospel Book Bearer**

Corliss Wise

### **Intercessor**

Gloria Eaddy

### **Videographer**

Deadrea Bowden

### **The Epistoler**

Loretta Johnsn

### **Server**

Herman Hickman

### **Eucharistic Minister**

Corliss Wise

### **Crucifer**

DeNell Hickman

### **Thurifer**

Herman Hickman

### **Oblation Bearers**

Joseph Ray  
Rudy Wise

### **Cantor**

Brycen Stratton  
Shekinah Frieson

### **Ushers**

Judy Battiste  
Darnell Holmes  
Loretta Johnson

### **Violin**

Alex Lopez-Arrocha

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**DOK WINTER SERVICE PROJECT...**St. Luke's Parishioners; Please join in with The Daughters of the King for our Winter Service Project. We are asking for winter items for the Rapid Shelter for (Women/Men) of Columbia, during the month of December/January. The Shelter needs: (coats, hats, handwarmers, gloves, scarves, thermal socks and blankets) A large black and yellow bin will be placed in the Narthex, **Sunday, December 7, 2025 – January 7, 2026**. Thank you and God's Blessings. The Mildred S. Murray Chapter; Corliss Wise & Beverly Ray.

## **PARISH FELLOWSHIP & FLOWER CHART FOR 2026... posted on the Communications Board in Griffin Hall.**

**CONFIRMATION/REAFFIRMATION/RECEPTION**... Anyone desiring the Rite of Confirmation, Reaffirmation, or Reception into the Episcopal Church is asked to contact the Rector. Confirmation classes will be held during the Lenten season.

**TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP**... Anyone baptized person who wants to transfer their membership to St. Luke's is asked to contact the Rector.

**BAPTISM**... Anyone interested in baptism for themselves (not previously baptized) or a child is asked to contact the Rector.

**SECURITY**.... Parishioners, in light of recent events in our nation and city, the importance of security cannot be taken lightly. Please consider giving a donation for Security so that we may be proactive and not reactive.

**ST. LUKE'S CHORAL SCHOLARS & BLAKELY-ROBINSON MUSIC FUND**... **Your contributions are always appreciated and needed more than ever.** Contributions to these funds help to secure choristers & instrumentalists for our Sunday services as well as special services: funerals, weddings, etc. It is because of your continued generous contributions that we are able present glorious choral & instrumental music to the glory of God. Please consider contributing towards this fund.

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## **SERMON NOTES/REFLECTIONS/QUESTIONS**

# CALENDAR OF SERVICES/MEETINGS/EVENTS

JANUARY	SERVICE/MEETING/EVENT	TIME & PLACE
1 <sup>st</sup> (Thursday)	New Year's Day	
2 <sup>nd</sup> (Friday)	Parish Office Closed	
3 <sup>rd</sup> (Saturday)	Parish Office Closed	
4 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	The Second Sunday after Christmas Day The Holy Eucharist: Rite II	10:00am/Nave
	ECW	11:45/Nave
5 <sup>th</sup> (Monday)	Rector's Day Off	
	Historic Waverly Community Meeting	6:00pm Bishop's Memorial AME Church
6 <sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)	The Feast of the Epiphany	No service at the parish this year.
	Fr. meets with the Board of Examining Chaplains	Diocesan House
7 <sup>th</sup> (Wednesday)	Fr. Meets with the Board of Examining Chaplains	Diocesan House
	Adult Formation w/ Morning Prayer Leader: Veda Johnson	10:30am Griffin Hall
	DOK Winter Service Project Ends	
	Choir Rehearsal	6:00pm-7:30pm Chancel
	Fresh Start Ministry Meeting	6:00pm/ZOOM
8 <sup>th</sup> (Thursday)	Fresh Start	9:00am-12:00pm
	Rector's Deanery Meeting	10:00am/St. John's Episcopal Church
	Fr. Meets with Board of Examining Chaplains	Diocesan Office Conference Room
9 <sup>th</sup> (Friday)	Rector's Spiritual Day: Sermon Prep, Spiritual Direction, Meet with Clergy mentor, etc.	8:00am-5:00pm
10 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday Feeding	12:00pm-1:00pm

		Griffin Hall Outside @ the Entrance door
11 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	The First Sunday after the Epiphany: The Baptism of Our Lord	10:00am/Nave w/the Renewal of Baptismal Vows & Asperges
	The Installation of New Vestry Members	10:00am Nave
	Confirmation Class	1:00pm-2:30pm Griffin Hall
12 <sup>th</sup> (Monday)	Rector's Day Off	
13 <sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)	Archives Committee	10:30am-1:30pm Archives room
	Finance Committee	3:00pm-4:30pm Griffin Hall
14 <sup>th</sup> (Wednesday)	Choir Rehearsal	6:00pm-7:30pm Chancel
15 <sup>th</sup> (Thursday)	Fresh Start	9:00am-12:00pm
16 <sup>th</sup> (Friday)	Rector's Spiritual Day: Sermon Prep, Spiritual Direction, Meet with Clergy mentor, etc.	
	Vestry Retreat Leader: Mark Tidsworth	6:00pm-9:00pm Griffin Hall
	Vestry Retreat Leader: Mark Tidsworth	9:00am-3:00pm The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd Conference Room 1512 Blanding St.
17 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	DOK Meeting	3:00pm/Griffin Hall
18 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	The Second Sunday after the Epiphany The Holy Eucharist: Rite II	10:00am/Griffin Hall Guest Speaker Dr. Baron Davis

	Called Meeting of the Vestry Presider: The Rev. Dr. James Lyon, IV, Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, on behalf of Bishop Richards	1:00pm-2:00pm Griffin Hall
19 <sup>th</sup> (Monday)	Rector's Day Off	
	MLK Holiday Day of Service & Remembrance	
20 <sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)	Vestry Meeting w/ Archives Presentation	6:00pm-7:30pm Griffin Hall
21 <sup>st</sup> (Wednesday)	Quilters & Crafters	10:30am-1:30pm
	Choir Rehearsal	6:00pm-7:30pm Chancel
22 <sup>nd</sup> (Thursday)	Fresh Start	9:00am-12:00pm
	Bylaws Committee	5:00pm-6:00pm ZOOM
23 <sup>rd</sup> (Friday)	Rector's Spiritual Day: Sermon Prep, Spiritual Direction, Meet with Clergy mentor, etc.	
24 <sup>th</sup> (Saturday)	4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday Feeding	12:00pm-1:00pm Griffin Hall; outside @ the Entrance door
25 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday)	The Third Sunday after the Epiphany Ante-Communion Service	10:00am/Nave <b>Officiant:</b> Corliss Wise <b>Homilist:</b> Brian Baldwin (?)
	Altar Guild Meeting	11:45am/Nave
26 <sup>th</sup> (Monday)	Rector's Day Off	
27 <sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)	Buildings & Grounds	5:30pm-6:30pm Griffin Hall
28 <sup>th</sup> (Wednesday)	Choir Rehearsal	6:00pm-7:30pm Chancel
29 <sup>th</sup> (Thursday)	Fresh Start	9:00am-12:00pm
	Endowment Committee	12:30-1:30pm

		Griffin Hall
30 <sup>th</sup> (Friday)	Rector's Spiritual Day: Sermon Prep, Spiritual Direction, Meet with Clergy mentor, etc.	
31 <sup>st</sup> (Saturday)		

## **LITURGICAL NOTE**

### **THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS**

In the Episcopal Church, Christmas is not just a day—it is a season. Beginning on December 25 and lasting for twelve days until the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6, the Christmas season celebrates the profound mystery of the Incarnation: God becoming flesh and dwelling among us in the person of Jesus Christ. Unlike the secular world, which often ends the festivities after December 25, the Church *begins* its celebration of Christmas on that day. These twelve days are marked by joy, beauty, and a sense of awe at the wonder of God's love made manifest in a child born in Bethlehem.

Liturgical Color: *White or Gold*

Timeframe: *December 25 through January 5 (The Twelve Days of Christmas)*

Theme: *Incarnation, Joy, and Light*

The Christmas season invites us to dwell in the joy of Emmanuel—*God with us*—and to recognize that Christ's birth is not only a historical event but a present and ongoing reality in our lives. It is a time to reflect on how we are called to embody the light of Christ in a world that still longs for peace, justice, and hope.

Key Characteristics:

- Celebration of Jesus' birth—the light of the world coming into the darkness
- Emphasis on joy, hope, and divine presence
- Liturgies filled with beloved carols, readings from the Gospels, and festive decorations
- The Creed and Prayers of the People often reflect the mystery of the Incarnation

## Major Feasts During the Season:

- Christmas Day (December 25): The Nativity of Our Lord
- The Feast of St. Stephen (December 26): First Christian martyr
- The Feast of St. John (December 27): Apostle and Evangelist
- The Holy Innocents (December 28): Remembering the children killed by Herod
- The Holy Name (January 1): Commemorating Jesus' naming and circumcision
- The Feast of the Epiphany (January 6): Celebrates the visit of the Magi and Christ revealed to the Gentiles (marks the end of the Christmas season)

The Christmas season lasts twelve days, from the vigil of Christmas Eve until Jan. 5, the day before the Epiphany, also known as Twelfth Night. Instead of packing away the Christmas decorations, take some time, over the full season, to savor the wonder of the Incarnation and to celebrate!

Here are some simple ideas for celebrating all of Christmastide:

- Leave your decorations up until the Epiphany (January 6)
- Move the Magi (3 Kings / Wise Men) from your nativity scenes around the house every day until they reach Jesus.
- Play Christmas music through the Epiphany.
- Spread out Christmas gifts over the twelve days.
- And just make sure to do something "Christmas-y" each day – bake holiday goodies, put together Christmas themed puzzles, go on a drive to look at Christmas lights in your neighborhood (or beyond), decorate Gingerbread houses or watch your favorite Christmas movies!

## **THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY**

The manifestation of Christ to the peoples of the earth. The winter solstice was kept on Jan. 6 at some places during the first centuries of the Christian Era. In opposition to pagan festivals, Christians chose this day to celebrate the various manifestations, or "epiphanies," of Jesus' divinity. These showings of his divinity included his birth, the coming of the Magi, his baptism, and the Wedding at Cana where he miraculously changed water into wine. The day was called "The Feast of Lights." Celebration of the Son of God replaced celebration of the sun. Baptisms were done, and a season of preparation was instituted. It was later called Advent. The solstice was kept on Dec. 25 by the fourth century. Jesus' birth was celebrated on this day in both eastern and western churches. The western church commemorated the coming of the Magi on Jan.

6. The eastern church continued to celebrate the Baptism of our Lord and the Wedding at Cana on Jan. 6. In the east the day was called "Theophany" (manifestation of God). The coming of the Magi is celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6, in the BCP. The Baptism of our Lord is celebrated on the First Sunday after the Epiphany.

## **THE CHALKING OF THE DOORS**

This short liturgy is a way of marking our homes, usually at the front or main entrance, with sacred signs and symbols as we ask God's blessing upon those who live, work, or visit throughout the coming year. In Exodus, the Israelites marked their doors with blood so that the Lord would pass over their homes; but in this service, we mark our doors with chalk as a sign that we have invited God's presence and blessing into our homes. In Deuteronomy 6:9 God tells the people of Israel: "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house... You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Chalking the door is a tangible way to honour God in our lives. What do the numbers and letters mean? This year we will be writing: 20 + C + M + B + 26. The first and last numbers simply refer to the current year. The letters C M B come from the traditional names for the three kings: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also stand for the Latin sentence "Christus Mansionem Benedicat" which means, "May Christ bless this dwelling."

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### **Music Acknowledgements & Permission for Use**

#### **Gospel Acclamation**

from *The Lyric Gospel Acclamations*  
Tony Alonzo

#### **The Great Amen**

from the Negro Spiritual "Amen"  
by Jester Hairston

#### **Service music**

Opening Acclamation, *Gloria, Sursum corda, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, & The Lord's Prayer*, Permission by RiteSong online music library for one-time use of this material for congregational use.

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**The Christmas Blessing**—from *The Book of Occassional Services*

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“The Episcopal Church is a secret too well kept. Many are starved for what we experience daily and too easily take for granted. Invite others to come to your parish to experience this joy.”  
Louie Crew, author of *101 Reasons to be Episcopalian*