

St. Paul Lutheran Church of Stillwater, Minnesota

January 25, 2026

Third Sunday after Epiphany



Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God’s grace and mercy.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.



GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude

Gathering Song

“God’s Work, Our Hands”

1 God’s work, our hands: work - ing to - geth - er,
 2 God’s work, our feet: trav - 'ling to - geth - er,
 3 God’s work, our voice: sing - ing to - geth - er,
 4 God is at work in and a - round us:

build - ing a fu - ture, re - pair - ing the world,
 fol - low - ing Je - sus to plac - es un - known,
 prais - ing, pro - claim - ing to all who will hear,
 seed - lings are sprout - ing and bread's on the rise!

rais - ing up homes, plant - ing new gar - dens,
 walk - ing as friends, march - ing for free - dom,
 pray - ing for peace, shout - ing for jus - tice,
 Washed and set free, hum - bled and hon - ored,

feed - ing the hun - gry and shelt - 'ring the cold.
 run - ning the race with God's fu - ture the goal.
 claim - ing God's love for the lost and the least.
 gift - ed by grace, we re - spond in God's love.

Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
 Bless, God, our feet as we fol - low your way,
 Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
 Bless, God, our lives as we an - swer your call,

shar - ing the good news of your gos - - - pel
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - - - pel
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - - - pel
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - - - pel

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

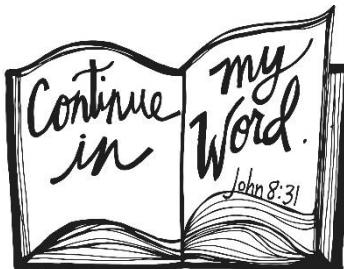
Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.



First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 638

Isaiah 9:1-4

The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.

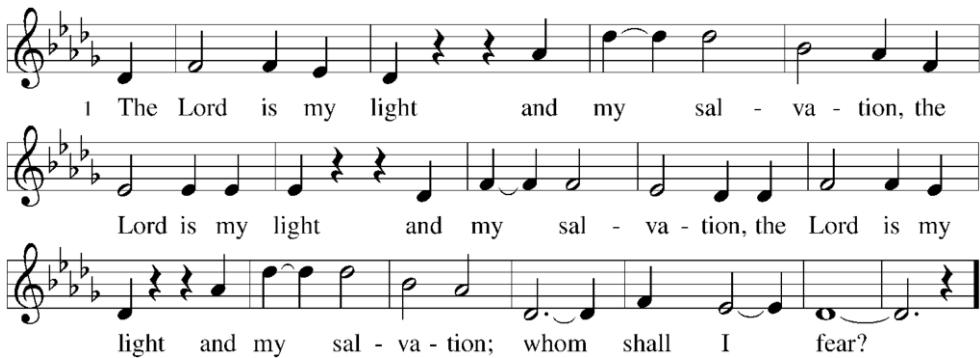
At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

The refrain is sung first by the soloist, then repeated by all, as indicated (R).



1 The Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion, the Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion; whom shall I fear? The Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion, the Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion; whom shall I fear?

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

⁶Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me.

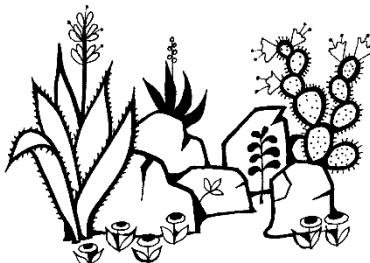
Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary,
sacrifices of rejoicing;
I will sing and make music to the LORD. *R*

⁷Hear my voice, O LORD, when I call;
have mercy on me and answer me.

⁸My heart speaks your message— “Seek my face.”
Your face, O LORD, I will seek.

⁹Hide not your face from me,
turn not away from your servant in anger.

Cast me not away—you have been my helper;
forsake me not, O God of my salvation. *R*



1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions and share the unified outlook of the gospel. Discord arises when we forget that we belong not to human leaders or institutions but to Christ. Indeed, the unifying word of the cross of Christ is the center of the gospel and the power of God's salvation.

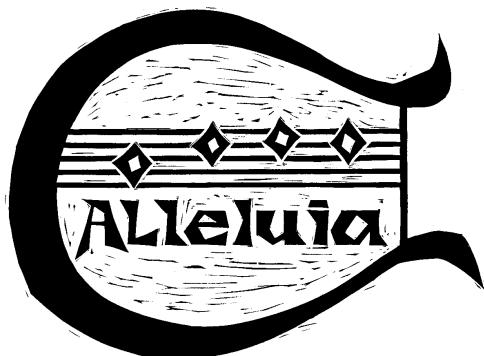
At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje



Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? Al - le -

lu - ia. You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 5

Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Pages 3-4

Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God's reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

ELW hymn 798

“Will You Come and Follow Me”

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

At the conclusion:

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.



Hymn of the Day

ELW hymn 659

"Will You Let Me Be Your Servant"

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts,

We lift them to the Lord

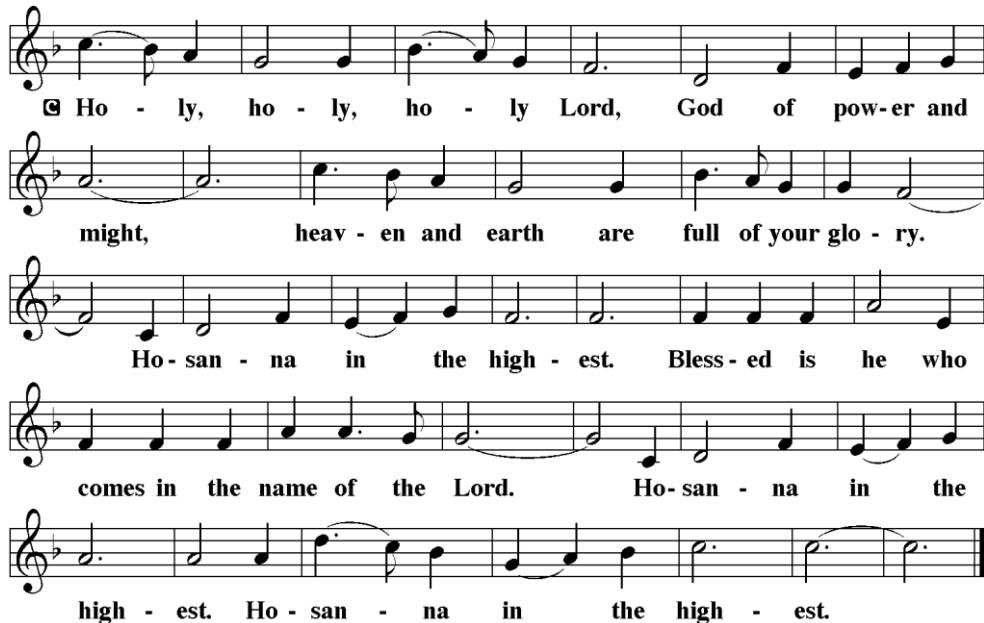
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(Continued on the next page.) 7

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.

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 are you, O holy God: you are the Life and Light of all. By your powerful word you created all things. Through the prophets you called your people to be a light to the nations.

Blessed are you for Jesus, your Son. He is your Light, shining in our darkness and revealing to us your mercy and might.

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

Remembering, therefore, his preaching and healing, his dying and rising, and his promise to come again, we await that day when all the universe will rejoice in your holy and life-giving light.

By your Spirit bless us and this meal, that, refreshed with this heavenly food, we may be light for the world, revealing the brilliance of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

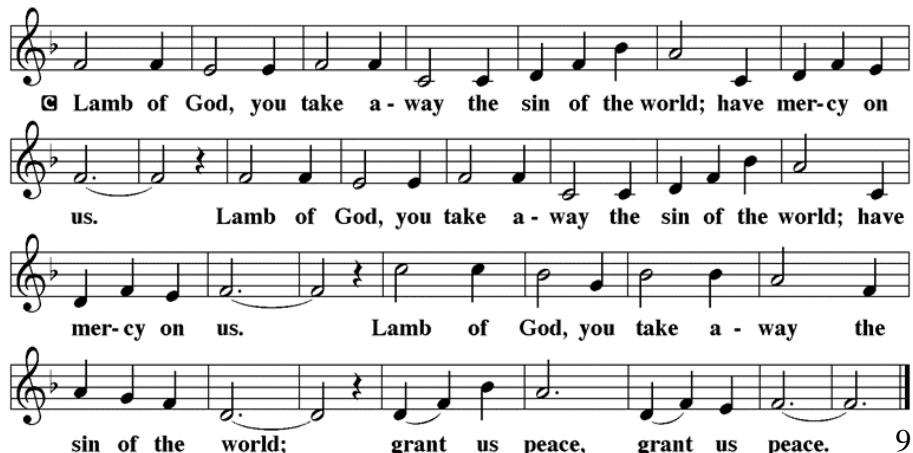
Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**



The musical notation consists of four staves of music in common time, using a treble clef. The lyrics are integrated into the music, appearing below the notes. The lyrics are:

C Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

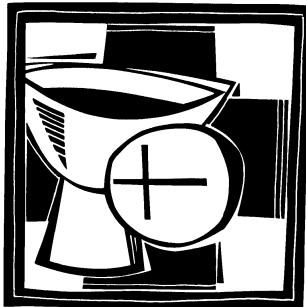
When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond:

Amen.



Prayer After Communion

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

Charge and Blessing

Go out into the world in peace;
have courage;
hold on to what is good;
return no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak, and help the suffering;
honor all people;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and \ddagger give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

ELW hymn 715

"Christ, Be Our Light"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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DAILY PRAYER

Commerce and Labor



Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ dignified our labor by sharing our toil. Guide us with your justice in the workplace, so that we may never value things above people, or surrender honor to love of gain or lust for power. Prosper all efforts to put an end to work that brings no joy, and teach us how to govern the ways of business to the harm of none and for the sake of the common good; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY

Baptism, Once and For All



Paul's comments in our reading from First Corinthians remind us that all Christians are baptized either into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ or into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is into the Christian church as a whole, rather than into its denominational units, and nearly all branches and denominations of the church across time have agreed not to re-baptize anyone who has already received baptism.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

Call to discipleship



When Jesus calls us to be disciples, he calls us to place our ultimate trust in a good and gracious God. This call to discipleship is echoed in the First Commandment, given to Moses by God on the mountain centuries earlier. "You shall have no other gods," booms the voice of God from the mountain. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther asks himself, "What is this?" He responds, "We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things." What do you fear the most? Whom or what do you love? In what is your trust most likely to be? Anything that we fear, love, or trust can obscure our relationship with God. This week, pray that God would help you work through whatever you fear, love, and trust more than Jesus. And pray that God would give you, like the disciples in our gospel today, grace to follow.

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Conversion of Paul

Sunday, January 25, 2026

The week of prayer begun by the remembrance of Peter's confession now comes to an end as we recall the pivotal moment in the life of the other pillar of the early church, the apostle Paul. His encounter with the risen Christ turned him from persecutor of the followers of Christ to one of their leaders.

Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries

Monday, January 26, 2026

These three early Christian men were missionary companions of the apostle Paul. Timothy became bishop of Ephesus, Titus bishop of Crete, and Silas was imprisoned with Paul at Philippi until they were delivered by an earthquake.

Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Women as well as men were important Christian leaders from the beginning, as demonstrated by these coworkers of the apostle Paul. Lydia, a seller of purple goods, lent her home for a church; Dorcas was known for charitable works; and Phoebe was a deacon in the church at Cenchrae.

Thomas Aquinas, teacher, died 1274

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

One of the most brilliant and creative theologians in the church's history, Aquinas worked to bring together scripture and the philosophy of Aristotle. A member of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), Aquinas was also a hymnwriter.

GOSPEL MESSAGE **Just How Near Is It?**

This anxious question is as old as Christians' faith: How near? How near is the kingdom of heaven? Near when angels announce a holy birth. Now? Near when Jesus unrolls a scroll in the synagogue, declaring the acceptable time. Now? Near when miracles of sight and sound and speech, bread and water and wine astound. Now? Near when the Son of David trots into Jerusalem on a donkey, talks of paradise at Golgotha, abandons the tomb. Now? Near when parades of calculations and predictions, numbering of days and decoding of signs make their guesses. Now?

John the Baptizer, eagerly baptizing converts and then, if hesitantly, Jesus himself—John the broadcaster, on behalf of a Savior for the world—gets arrested and executed. The hailed Messiah, Jesus, takes up residence in a tiny fishing village in a land overtaken and occupied by an empire of corruption and death. It would seem—or it should seem, if it does not—to anyone paying attention that the kingdom of heaven, if anywhere at all, was nowhere near.

“Repent” was Jesus’ inaugural message. Such a hard thing for people enduring in the hardest of times to hear. Repent of what, for what? By that time, ancient promises made in the name of God must have worn thin at best, if they had not already been tossed out as defective. In how many ways had unreliable promises and hopes for some heavenly kingdom been smashed in their collisions with each dawning day that proved to be just a copy of the grueling one before it?

Repent. Turn around. Pursue life in another direction. A gutsy dispatch! But it caught fire. It spread. It drew crowds because everywhere Jesus went, all through the everyday places of hard-hit dreams and suffering spirits and pained bodies—exactly in those places—Jesus showed himself to be the heavenly good news that heals, the joyful reason to repent of fear. So, welcome and become the kingdom of heaven now and here.