

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
January 4, 2026
Epiphany of our Lord



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.

The feast of Epiphany ("manifestation") concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism.

We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.

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

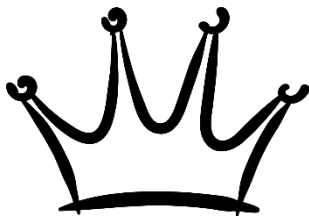
"Messiah"

**Someone's shouting from the desert.
Someone's shouting from the sea.
Someone's shouting from the mountain.
Someone's shouting from the valley.**

***Messiah,
Come and be our King.
Messiah,
Come and be our King.***

**Someone's shouting from the city.
I am young I am cold.
Someone's shouting from the country.
I am lonely I am old. R.**

**Someone's shouting I am broken
Someone's shouting make me whole
Someone's shouting come and change me
Someone's shouting save my soul. R.**



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

O God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

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

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 690

Isaiah 60:1-6

Jerusalem is assured that nations will make a pilgrimage to her because the light of God's presence is in her midst. The bountiful food of the sea and the profits of international trade will come streaming to Jerusalem and thereby declare God's praise.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Epiphany Anthem

John Ostrem and Karen Hillman

"Bethlehem Highway

Second Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 193

Ephesians 3:1-12

What had been hidden from previous generations is now made known through the gospel ministry of Paul and others. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles participate in the richness of God's promised salvation.

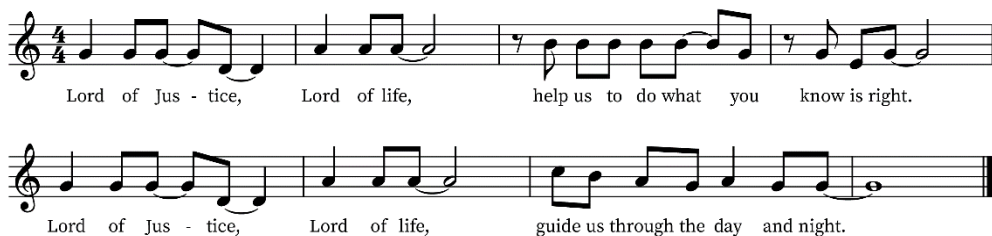
At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

"Lord of Justice"



To the stranger
May we give welcome
To the hungry
May we give bread
To the naked
May we give clothing
To the homeless
A place to lay their head

To the wounded
May we give healing
To the voiceless
May we give words
To the captives
May we give freedom
To the tortured
Release from all the hurt

Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 2

Matthew 2:1-12

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

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

Jenny Brelje, CYF and Outreach Director

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

ELW Hymn 302

"As With Gladness Men of Old"

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

At the conclusion:

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ 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.



Offering Hymn

"We Three Kings of Orient Are"

**We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.**

*Oh, star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!*

**Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again;
king forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign. R.**

**Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a deity nigh;
prayer and praising, gladly raising,
worshiping God Most High. R.**

**Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. R.**

**Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
heav'n sings alleluia:
alleluia the earth replies. R.**



Offering Prayer

Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our 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.

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

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



Ho - ly, ho - ly, oh most ho - ly, God of pow'r and God of might!

Heav'n and earth are full of glo - ry! Sing Ho - san - na - to the heights!

Bless - ed be the one who comes now! Hail Ho - san - na! Prince of Peace!

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

(Continued on the next page.) 7

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.
We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,
one God, 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.**

O Lamb of God you take - a - way; you take a-way the
sin - of the world. Have mer-cy on us now - we pray; have mer-cy on us
now - and al-ways. Re - joice! Re-joyce! O Lamb - of God, grant
us your peace, oh 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.

Communion Song

Andy Peterson, clarinet

""Star of the East"

Prayer After Communion

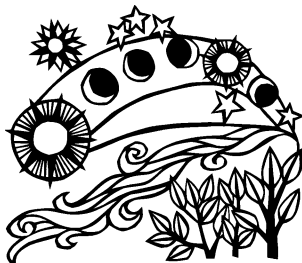
Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation,
and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your
Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people,
revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ, our
Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

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

Announcements



Blessing

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 † give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

"Jesus, the Light of the World"

1 Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, Je-sus, the Light of the world;
2 Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; Je-sus, the Light of the world;
3 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Je-sus, the Light of the world;
4 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Je-sus, the Light of the world;

"Glo - ry to the new-born king," Je-sus, the Light of the world.
join the tri - umph of the skies; Je-sus, the Light of the world.
Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord! Je-sus, the Light of the world.
Hail the Sun of righ-teous-ness! Je-sus, the Light of the world.

We'll walk in the light, beau-ti-ful light, come where the dew-drops of mer-cy are bright.

Shine all a-round us by day and by night, Je-sus, the Light of the world.

The musical score is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. It features a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The melody is primarily in the Soprano and Alto parts, with the piano providing harmonic support. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves, and the piano part is shown in the lower staves.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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DAILY PRAYER For My Home



Blessed are you, O God, who spreads forth the heavens like a tent, who shelters our lives, and who comes to make a home with us. Watch over me in all my going out and my coming in; keep all evil away from my door; and let me share the hospitality of my home with all who visit, that those who enter may know your love and peace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

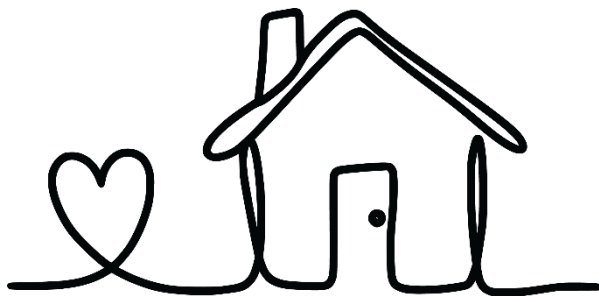
CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY Hymn Note



A well-known Epiphany carol is “As with gladness men of old” (ELW 302). Written by William Dix in 1860 , the hymn prays that like the magi, we may see the light, seek God’s mercy, and bring our gifts to Christ. In the northern hemisphere, the sun is setting very early on January nights: yet we have Christ, who is the sun that never goes down.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

When Strangers Become Neighbors



Many scripture passages and stories emphasize care and hospitality of foreigners, and today's Epiphany gospel is one such example as Mary and Joseph welcome the foreign magi into their home. That the Bible, an ancient text, emphasizes welcome to the outsider was an extraordinarily counter-cultural stance in a world of tribal loyalty and fear of the outsider. Yet the Bible teaches that such outsiders could be divine-sent helpers or even angels. Taking the time to get to know strangers who happen to be our neighbors is an act of faith. Indeed, their well-being may depend on us. Martin Luther teaches in the 8th Commandment: "We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light."

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Adrian of Canterbury, teacher, died around 710 (TFF)

Friday, January 9, 2026

African by birth, Adrian (or Hadrian) worked with Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, in developing the church in England. He was director of a school at which church leaders were trained.

Martin Luther King Jr., renewer of society, martyr, died 1968

Thursday, January 15, 2026

An American prophet of justice among races and nations, King was an eloquent preacher, a leader of the nonviolent resistance to race-segregated society, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Born on this date, he was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

Antony of Egypt, renewer of the church, died around 356

Saturday, January 17, 2026

One of the earliest of the Egyptian desert fathers, Antony gave away his sizeable inheritance and became a hermit. Later he became leader of a group of monks who devoted themselves to prayer, worship, and labor.

Pachomius, renewer of the church, died 346

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Born in Egypt, Pachomius became a Christian while a soldier. He became a hermit (a solitary monk) and organized others into a religious community. His rule for monasteries influenced later ones in both the Eastern and Western churches.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

In This Kind of Time

Make no mistake: The world with the guiding star from the east, where covert seekers of signs traveled by night vision, desperate to find a child king, was not a mockup for mantelpiece arrangements swaddled in soft light; not a trio of characters auditioning for some future, twinkling-light Christmas pageant or a living-nativity reenactment. That world was a troubled world, a desperate world, an unfair and brutal world, where wealth bought power, and where ruthlessness and fear danced a deadly tango. It was a world under empire; a world choked by Herod; a world of injustice and occupation, threats and massacre, of fragile hope and cementing anger.

In such a world, during such a time, came some traveling souls. Seeking. Searching. Pursuing. Risking. Wanting. Needing. Offering. Bravely daring a heavenly light to fail them. “We have come to pay him homage,” they confessed. Homage to one who was destined to be shepherd among the lowly, voice for the muted, provider for the hungry, mender for the worn-out, embrace for the dejected, but a loser in the eyes of the empire. In other words, these travelers were defying the empire of greatness, denying its lies, and challenging its supremacy. They followed that strident light to offer gifts and to offer themselves, among lowliness.

In secret, the weight of empire wobbles. Herod plots. The powers conspire. A king is frightened.

In such a time . . . Epiphany happens! This awakening breaks forth—this fulgent way of seeing, this vision of God’s direction in the now and the here; in this world, in yours, in theirs; in those circumstances and ours—a startling, unremitting shaft, or a motioning illumination, to beckon God’s beloved people, God’s treasured creation, out of darkness by another road.

Epiphany, in this kind of time.