



The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 * (708) 442-5250

“Faith Active in Love”

www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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Issue 1

We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Images of Epiphany

Along with Easter and Pentecost, the festival of the Epiphany was one of the early church's most important festivals. Its significance is surprising when we realize that today most North American congregations observe the festival of the Epiphany with little of the fanfare that we associate with Christmas, Easter, or even Pentecost. One of the reasons is that the feast of the Epiphany has a complex history. The season that follows it features biblical events and theological realities that are more subtle than the dramatic raising of a man from the dead, for instance, or an invasion by the Spirit through wind, flame, and tongues. Why was the Epiphany such an important festival in the early centuries of the church?

The festival originated in the East, where it was celebrated from the third century as a commemoration of the Lord's baptism. Later on it came to include an observance of the nativity as well. The festival was introduced into the West in the fourth century as an observance of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the magi; it was not an observance of the Lord's baptism. No matter which of these three events from the life of Jesus was observed on the Epiphany, the common theme was the appearance of God in the world in one form or another.

Notice that the church designates the Sundays that follow Epiphany as Sundays *after* the Epiphany. By contrast, the Sundays in Lent are identified as Sundays *in* Lent, and the Sundays following Easter are designated as the Sundays *of* Easter. Epiphany is not a season in the same way that Lent is. And Easter, the day of all days, is not so much a season as it is a day that lasts fifty days, Pentecost being the culmination of that day. These distinctions help the church to maintain the relative importance of these three liturgical periods.

In the churches of the West today, the Epiphany is the observance on January 6 of the manifestation of Christ to all the nations of the world, which the gospel represents in the persons of the magi who found Jesus in Bethlehem. In this liturgical year the festival occurs on a Saturday. In the Sundays that follow, we see his glory revealed at a river, a wedding, in a synagogue, beside a lake, on a plain, and on a mountain.

What these scriptural images and stories have to say to us, in the end, is that if we look with discerning eye and listen with discriminating ear, we can perceive God behind, above, within, around, and below the world all about us. We can contemplate an infant lying in a manger, for instance, and have a vision of God.

When we approach all of creation this way, we find it more difficult to abuse our environment, to treat it casually, to hoard it, or to use it in destructive ways. Living responsibly in the world then becomes less a question of merely doing good and avoiding evil, less

a question of moral imperatives or obeying the Ten Commandments, and more an active partnership with God in transfiguring creation until it becomes a place increasingly fit for the kingdom.

For these reasons and many others, Epiphany and the Sundays that follow are critical occasions for the church to address the secularization of society and the world, giving answer to, or at least declaring solidarity with, those who struggle with lingering doubts about the reality of God in our troubled, violent world. Is God important in the world or not? Can we see any real evidence in the life of the average person around us that God really matters?

Certainly the average unchurched person is capable of living a completely secular life that is at once good, socially responsible, generous, and loving. At its most obvious, the world is truly a satisfying place to be. We can take it seriously and manage to live a life that appears rich and full, even without "interference" from God. What does the church have to say to those who dismiss the practice of religion as irrelevant to a life lived well in this modern, high-tech world of ours?

The church's answer is that behind the evidence of things seen, there lurks evidence of things unseen. A recovery of Epiphany would sharpen our eyesight, attune our ears, indeed develop all our senses, so that we are receptive to the glimpses of God's glory all around us. Can we, even at our frantic pace, capture a craving for that glory, freshen our yearning for incomprehensible light and incomparable music? Or have commerce and entertainment so deadened us to the subtle reality of God hidden behind the appearance of things that the appearances themselves suffice?

This kind of sensual deadness has no place among a eucharistic people who claim that words uttered, bread broken, and wine poured out have a meaning far beyond the mere words, the mere bread and wine. The word preached and the eucharist shared are, after all, the church's greatest assurance that the material world holds more than our senses at first tell us. The words we hear, are they now the very Word of God made flesh? And the bread and wine we share, are they not a communion in the body and blood of Christ? These material things, are they not transfigured for us in faith when two or three of us gather in Jesus' name?

And what do we say we believe? In the Nicene Creed we describe Christ as light from light. In the evening we identify Christ as the light that dispels our darkness. The prayer for the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany says, "Almighty God, you sent your only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear." When the prophet Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, what he saw, at last, was his salvation revealed.

—continued on next page...

Physicists say that if you strike clay with a hammer and look at it with a low-level infrared camera, you will see that it emits light. Quantum physics has led some scientists to believe that one day, everything will exist in the form of light. Some of the world's great luminaries, spending solitary time in deserts or canyons, have beheld an illuminated earth. Who has not heard music when a crystal goblet is tapped?

As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote:
The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.

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New Year Traditions

from the *Old Farmer's 2025 Almanac*

Eat Something Special

Many New Year traditions involve food. Here are a few:

- In the southern United States, black-eyes peas and pork foretell good fortune.
- Eating any ring-shaped treat (such as a donut) symbolizes “coming full circle” and leads to good fortune. In Dutch homes, fritters called *olie bollen* are served.
- The Irish enjoy pastries called bannocks.
- In India and Pakistan, rich promises prosperity.
- Apples dipped in honey are a Rosh Hashanah tradition.
- In Swiss homes, dollops of whipped cream, symbolizing the richness of the year to come, are dropped on the floor (and allowed to remain there!).

Drink a Beverage

Although the pop of a champagne cork signals the arrival of the New Year around the world, some countries have their own traditions:

- “Wassail,” the Gaelic term for “good health,” is served in some parts of England.
- Spiced “hot pint” is the Scottish version of wassail. Traditionally, the Scots drank to each other’s prosperity and also offered this warm drink to neighbors along with a small gift.
- In Holland, toasts are made with hot, spiced wine.

Give a Gift

- New Year’s Day was once the time to swap presents.
- Gifts of gilded nuts or coins marked the start of the new year in Rome.
- Eggs, the symbol of fertility, were exchanged by the Persians.
- Early Egyptians traded earthenware flasks.
- In Scotland, coal, shortbread, and silverware were traditionally exchanged for good luck.

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The Star Signal

(Matthew 2: 1-12)

Not every journey toward the Christ starts like the magi’s in darkness, but there might come a time when, in the empty hours of an otherwise unremarkable night, you have happened to look up at the usual sky, and noticed, almost by accident, between passages of gray beasts of slow-moving cloud the bright bloom of a strange star flowering, and something begins to open a little somewhere beneath your skin, as if that new wedge of light in the sky had inserted itself into your soul, not enough to cause you any hurt, but just enough that you feel a pang, the twinge of something like longing, as if your eyes in the silence have become ears in the darkness, and you are hearing a holy summons, distant but ringing like a silver trumpet in the chambers of your listening heart, and you gaze at that star where it stands in the sky dropping dust on the night horizon, and you think it might be signaling a holy Presence in the world and a road you can take to meet it, and that such a road, lit with such promise, might lead to a great adventure, where life becomes challenged and changed and as new as the sky above a better world. And so you pack, and you leave on this journey, this journey where Christ is not only waiting but walking your road at your side, and you follow that light as it closes the distance, as it reaches deep within you, touching gifts you carry in your hand.



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November 2025	
Current, Benevolence and Freewill Offering	
Budgeted Offering: \$2,615.00	
Date	Offering
11/2	\$2,642.00
11/9	\$ 712.00
11/16	\$2,299.00
11/23	\$1,155.00
11/30	\$ 855.00

JANUARY WORSHIP SERVERS

January 4th:

Greeters: Edward and Joanne Sefara
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Lector: Aiden Altavilla
Live Stream: Fred Kuzel
Usher: John Kostelny

January 11th:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki
Assisting Minister: Beverly Tarbox
Lector: Kristine Boike
Live Stream: Charles Matthies
Usher: Walter Cudecki

January 18th:

Greeter: Carrie Watkiss
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Lector: George Valek
Live Stream: Paul Watkiss
Usher: Rafael Martinez

January 25th:

Greeters: John and Shirley Kostelny
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Lector: Fred Kuzel
Live Stream: John Broussard
Usher: Janet Broussard

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Fred Kuzel



January Announcements

- Offering envelopes for 2026 are available for pick up in the lower hallway adjacent to the dining hall. Please pick up envelopes for friends or relatives who are unable to do so.
- If you will be leaving the Chicago area during the winter months for warmer climates, please notify the church office before then so the monthly newsletter can be forwarded to your temporary residence or cancelled until you return. The congregation incurs a fee for each newsletter that is undeliverable. Stopped mail delivery to your permanent residence is considered "undeliverable" and returned to the church for a fee. Thank you for your assistance.
- ★ A reminder to the congregation, especially during the months of winter weather, that complimentary cab service is available on Sunday mornings for rides to and from worship services. Please contact Blue Village Cab Company at 1-708-583-6900 as early as possible to make arrangements for pick up. When arranging your pick-up, please remind the dispatcher that the ride is to be billed to account number #101755.

FEBRUARY WORSHIP SERVERS

February 1st:

Greeter: Staci Harden
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Lectors: Gary and Jocelyn Drahos
Live Stream: Fred Kuzel
Usher: Janet Broussard

February 8th:

Greeter: Ann Kmet
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Lector: Philip Painter
Live Stream: Charles Matthies
Usher: Rafael Martinez

February 15th:

Greeters: Philip and Linda Painter
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Lector: John Kostelny
Live Stream: Paul Watkiss
Usher: George Valek

Ash Wednesday, February 18th:

Greeters: Fred Kuzel
Assisting Minister: Beverly Tarbox
Lector: Tom Myers
Live Stream: John Broussard
Usher: Janet Broussard

February 22nd:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Lector: John Broussard
Live Stream: Fred Kuzel
Usher: Walter Cudecki

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Janice Hapgood

Worship Servers Please Note...

...that if you are unable to keep your scheduled date, please arrange for a replacement and call the church office with the change. Thank you.

Memorial Flowers

Dec. 7th : In memory of +Anna Slahor+ on the anniversary of her birth and the 34th anniversary of her death by remembering children John and Joanne Slahor and Shirley Babyar.

Jan. 4th : In celebration of Esther Meksto on her 95th birthday.

Directory change...

Dennis and Jane Lauritsen
185 E. Burlington
Riverside, IL 60546

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DATED MATERIAL

If one gives food to others, one will improve one's own lot, just as, for example, if one lights a fire for others, one will brighten one's own way (Nichiren Daishonin, "The Three Virtues of Food," ca. 1278).

Thank you!

Thank you to the following households who purchased poinsettias to decorate the chancel of the sanctuary for our Christmas services. Poinsettia plants may be taken home on Sunday, January 4th.

Ruth Bakalich
William Boor
Fred Kuzel
Esther Meksto
The Mocek Family

Martin and Ann Pennino
Mark and Liz Rouck
The Slahor Family
The Watkiss Family

A Prayer for the New Year

God of the years that lie behind us,
Lord of the years that stretch before,
Weaver of all the ties that bind us,
Keeper and King of the open door.

Grant us hope and courage glowing
White and pure as the stars above;
Grant us faith in a full stream flowing,
From the heights of Your eternal love.

Out of the ruins of doubt and sorrow,
Out of the aches and pain and tears,
Help us to fashion a new tomorrow,
Free from the anguish of blighting fears.

All through the seasons of sowing and reaping,
All through the harvest of song and tears.
Hold us close in Your tender keeping,
O Maker of all New Years!

-Author Unknown



The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6th *We Offer What We Have*

We bring what we can. We offer what we have. We give our time, our skills, our resources. We give not out of a sense of duty or obligation but in response to the immeasurable gift we have received.

Together, the church is the body of Christ, a ragtag community of believers following a hunch and a star. Together, we offer what we have. We offer our songs, words, hopes, fears, and failings. We offer our prayers. We offer our ability to comfort and mourn, our willingness to be vulnerable. We give our gifts, whatever they are, and we give them joyfully. Some shiny and new, some worn and mended, some cracked but beloved. Gifts more precious than gold, rarer than frankincense or myrrh.

We journey down a long road, sometimes through the dark. Together, we face danger. We face uncertainty. We face temptation. When we come finally, joyfully to celebrate the arrival of the baby Jesus, the king in the humble manger, we rejoice. We pay homage. We offer our gifts in response to the God who has given us all that we see and know. We offer what we have because of what we have received. We bring what we can because the gift that God gives us in Christ is a gift beyond our ability to measure.

We can't always offer as much as we wish we could, but we offer what we have in the spirit that we can and find that together, our broken gifts make a beautiful whole. The gift we have received is the sure and certain truth that our gifts are enough. That we are enough. That we are created with care and redeemed to be love and light in the world.

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