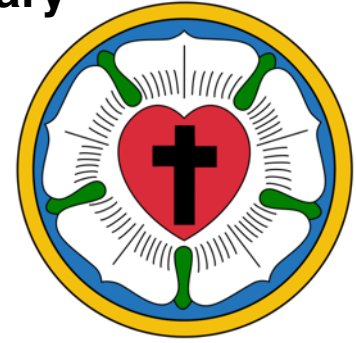




Victory in Christ Lutheran Church

January
2026



A Word from Pastor Schielke

The festival of Epiphany is celebrated by the church every year on January 6. While many do not consider it to be of the same importance as Christmas or Easter, Epiphany is one of the 12 festivals enumerated in our liturgical calendar. Epiphany is also the second oldest festival in the church; only Easter has been celebrated longer. Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season, the twelve days of Christmas. But what is it and why is it important for us?

Pastor John Bombaro puts it like this: "Epiphany is Christmas 2.0. Its conspicuous place following the nativity narrative in Matthew's Gospel presents it as the 'other Christmas,' the 'Christmas of the Gentiles.' At the first Christmas we find a swaddled baby in a manger visited by shepherds from the fields summoned by angels. In the 'other Christmas,' we find a toddler at His mother's feet in a house visited by Magi, Wise Men from the East guided by a star. The first Christmas was announced to Israel, the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham; the second Christmas was for the world, the nations, the Gentiles, the fulfillment of God's promise to Adam. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising,' God said (Isaiah 60:3)."

The coming of Epiphany is hinted at in this past Sunday's Gospel reading from Luke 2, Simeon's Nunc Dimitis. Simeon describes Jesus coming in the flesh as, "a light to the Gentiles." It's significant to note that Luke's gospel account of Christmas and the days shortly thereafter is filled with Jewish worshippers: the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. They all delight to worship the Messiah that was promised to come to the Israelites. But in Matthew's Gospel we hear of the magi or wisemen. The birth of the Messiah is revealed to them through their studies and the appearance of the star. These visitors from the east, possibly Persia, are almost certainly Gentiles.

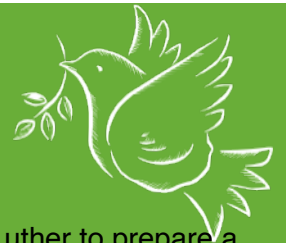
That the birth of Jesus is revealed to Gentiles is good news for us. Throughout the Old Testament there are foreshadowings that the coming Messiah would be for all people, not just those of Hebrew descent. And on the first Epiphany those hopes are realized as these wisemen would be the first Gentiles to worship the newborn king. Therefore, we too, Gentile Christians, gather to worship our Lord each Lord's day as Epiphany continues in our midst. The reality that Jesus Christ is the Savior for both Jew and

Gentile has been graciously revealed to us through the light of God's Word. We too are inheritors of the promises the Messiah brings: forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. Like the magi, we offer our gifts to the Messiah: praise, prayer, our tithes and offerings, and service to our neighbor.

To quote Pastor Bombaro again, "So, the outsiders are now the insiders. Those who stood on the outside of Israel, are now in the presence of Israel's eternal and greatest King, the promised Son of David. This is that great mystery of which the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians, how the Gentiles are now fellow heirs with Israel of the promise of salvation in Christ. The first Christmas was for the Jews, the circumcised, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But this 'other' Christmas is for the Gentiles, those who were once not God's people, but who now, by the grace of God in Christ have become the people of God. Epiphany is Christmas for you and all who are afar off."

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 15:57

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The Smalcald Articles - On December 11, 1536, John Frederick commissioned Martin Luther to prepare a statement of faith in the form of confessional articles, The Smalcald Articles (SA), for presentation to a meeting of Lutheran theologians and lay leaders on February 7, 1537, in Smalcald, Germany. While working on the SA, on December 18, Luther became seriously ill and was convinced he was near death. The SA were considered Luther's "last will and testament." Over the next months, you will find the articles of the Smalcald Articles in our newsletter. It's good for all of us to have at least some familiarity with this important doctrinal statement.

Article IV: Of the Papacy - Part 1

¹ That *the Pope is not, according to divine law or according to the Word of God the head of all Christendom* (for this [name] belongs to One only, whose name is Jesus Christ), but is only the bishop and pastor of the Church at Rome, and of those who voluntarily or through a human creature (that is, a political magistrate) have attached themselves to him, to be Christians, not under him as a lord, but with him as brethren [colleagues] and comrades, as the ancient councils and the age of St. Cyprian show.

² But to-day none of the bishops dare to address the Pope as brother as was done at that time [in the age of Cyprian]; but they must call him most gracious lord, even though they be kings or emperors. This [Such arrogance] we will not, cannot, must not take upon our conscience [with a good conscience approve]. Let him, however, who will do it, do so without us [at his own risk].

³ Hence it follows that all things which the Pope, from a power so false, mischievous, blasphemous, and arrogant, has done and undertaken. have been and still are purely diabolical affairs and transactions (with the exception of such things as pertain to the secular government, where God often permits much good to be effected for a people, even through a tyrant and [faithless] scoundrel) for the ruin of the entire holy [catholic or] Christian Church (so far as it is in his power) and for the destruction of the first and chief article concerning the redemption made through Jesus Christ.

⁴ For all his bulls and books are extant, in which he roars like a lion (as the angel in Rev. 12 depicts him, [crying out] that no Christian can be saved unless he obeys him and is subject to him in all things that he wishes, that he says, and that he does. All of which amounts to nothing less than saying: Although you believe in Christ, and have in Him [alone] everything that is necessary to salvation, yet it is nothing and all in vain unless you regard [have and worship] me as your god, and be subject and obedient to me. And yet it is manifest that the holy Church has been without the Pope for at least more than five hundred years, and that even to the present day the churches of the Greeks and of many other languages neither have been nor are

yet under the Pope. ⁵ Besides, as often remarked, it is a human figment which is not commanded, and is unnecessary and useless; for the holy Christian [or catholic] Church can exist very well without such a head, and it would certainly have remained better [purer, and its career would have been more prosperous] if such a head had not been raised up by the

devil. ⁶ And the Papacy is also of no use in the Church, because it exercises no Christian office; and therefore it is necessary for the Church to continue and to exist without the Pope.

⁷ And supposing that the Pope would yield this point, so as not to be supreme by divine right or from God's command, but that we must have [there must be elected] a [certain] head, to whom all the rest adhere [as their support] in order that the [concord and] unity of Christians may be preserved against sects and heretics, and that such a head were chosen by men, and that it were placed within the choice and power of men to change or remove this head, just as the Council of Constance adopted nearly this course with reference to the Popes, deposing three and electing a fourth; supposing, I say, that the Pope and See at Rome would yield and accept this (which, nevertheless, is impossible; for thus he would have to suffer his entire realm and estate to be overthrown and destroyed, with all his rights and books, a thing which, to speak in few words, he cannot do), nevertheless, even in this way Christianity would not be helped, but many more sects would arise than before.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			No School Christmas Break	1 No School Christmas Break	2 No School Christmas Break	3
4 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon Council Meeting	5	6 Epiphany Women's Bible Study 1:00 p.m.	7	8	9	10 Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
11 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon Youth Confirmation	12	13 Women's Bible Study 1:00 p.m.	14	15	16	17
18 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon Youth Confirmation	19 No School - Staff Development	20 Women's Bible Study 1:00 p.m.	21	22	23	24 Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
25 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon Voters' Meeting	26	27 Women's Bible Study 1:00 p.m.	28	29	30	31



Epiphany

Installation of Officers will be on Sunday, January 4.

Council Meeting will be on Sunday, January 4, following the noon meal.

Epiphany - Epiphany is when the wise men came to Bethlehem and offered their gifts to Jesus. This day is celebrated on Tuesday, January 6.

Voters' Meeting will be on Sunday, January 25, following the noon meal.

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January Birthdays:

3 Robin Kroeger

8 Donna Schober

25 Carrie Purdom

26 Logan Rohloff



Future Church Cleanings:

Clean the week of:

January 17 Higby and Metoxen Families

January 31 Haney and Knox Families

February 14 Hill and Kroeger Families

February 28 Schwiesow, Underwood, and
Wilson Families

For 2026, I would like to challenge every member of this congregation to read or continue reading through the Bible in one year. The Bible readings for January and part of February are listed below.

January 1: Genesis 1-3	January 15: Genesis 43-45	January 29: Exodus 33-35
January 2: Genesis 4-7	January 16: Genesis 46-47	January 30: Exodus 36-38
January 3: Genesis 8-11	January 17: Genesis 48-50	January 31: Exodus 39-40
January 4: Genesis 12 -15	January 18: Exodus 1-3	February 1: Leviticus 1-4
January 5: Genesis 16-18	January 19: Exodus 4-6	February 2: Leviticus 5-7
January 6: Genesis 19-21	January 20: Exodus 7-9	February 3: Leviticus 8-10
January 7: Genesis 22-24	January 21: Exodus 10-12	February 4: Leviticus 11-13
January 8: Genesis 25-26	January 22: Exodus 13-15	February 5: Leviticus 14-15
January 9: Genesis 27-29	January 23: Exodus 16-18	February 6: Leviticus 16-18
January 10: Genesis 30-31	January 24: Exodus 19-21	February 7: Leviticus 19-21
January 11: Genesis 32-34	January 25: Exodus 22-24	February 8: Leviticus 22-23
January 12: Genesis 35-37	January 26: Exodus 25-27	February 9: Leviticus 24-25
January 13: Genesis 38-40	January 27: Exodus 28-29	February 10: Leviticus 26-27
January 14: Genesis 41-42	January 28: Exodus 30-32	February 11: Numbers 1-2

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LCMS Stewardship Ministry

"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new. Also, He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true'" (Revelation 21:5).

In January there is a great deal of "new" talk. Parties are held to ring in the "new" year. "New" year's resolutions are made to set a "new" course of life in the "new" year. There is date forgetfulness as checks and other forms are filled out without using the "new" year on the dateline.

We use all this "new" talk because there is very often so much wrong with the old in us. We think back to the "new" resolutions from the previous year that only lasted a few weeks. That "new" person did not shed any pounds and instead, picked up a few. The "new" habits of going to the gym were soon replaced by even more time on the couch binging on Netflix. The "new" person who does not lose their temper, use sarcasm as a lethal weapon and spend more money than necessary, but who worships, prays and serves the Lord and the neighbor, never seemed to stick around. We need "new" talk because the Old Adam is alive and well within every one of us.

But this promise of "new" is a matter of stewardship. It is the Lord Himself who makes the promise of all things being new. These words recorded by St. John are not pious wishes or hopeless promises. They do what they say. YOU, that one baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, are NEW! These words are indeed trustworthy and true. This "new" comes to you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes free of charge, even without our prayer.

This stewardship of "new" is not a vague, someday kind of stewardship either. You are NEW now! Forgiven. Reborn from above. The old is gone, nailed to Calvary's cross and buried and rotting in a tomb that was only borrowed by Jesus for His resurrection rest. The Gospel is what makes us NEW every morning. Remembering your baptism, you are new. Confessing your sins and receiving absolution makes you new. Hearing the Gospel filling your ears makes you new. Feasting on Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper makes you new.

These mercies, totally undeserved as they are, are entrusted to us to steward TODAY even as we long for the Last Day. But we know how often we fail in this stewardship. We hoard God's creation as if it belongs to us. We belittle and devalue our neighbor because they look or sound or act in a way that we do not like. We seek to make the Holy Word of God softer and more palatable for those, or even ourselves, who refuse to confess sin as sin and repent. We value our comfort over truth, our reputation over faithfulness and our treasure over making sure that people get to hear of the Jesus who has done so much for the world and us.

We, as stewards of the Gospel, need to be made new every day. This is exactly what the Lord does. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel last year, so He gives us a new year. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel yesterday, and He gives us a new day. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel in the last few minutes, and yet in mercy our newness comes with each tick of the clock! Because that is how the Lord works.

As we see this working of all new things in us, it then calls us to be stewards of this newness to the world. This starts right in our own homes. It radiates out to our neighbors. It beams out from our congregations. This newness is teamed at the circuit, district and Synod levels all to shine the newness of the Gospel to those who need it.

Your new talk starts in the newness of the Gospel. Steward this treasure in this new year and this new day. It starts with a new you in Jesus. This is indeed trustworthy and true.

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