



**Christ
Lutheran**
CHURCH

2610 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, Indiana 46385
(219) 462-6660 • clcvalpo.org



January 26, 2025

We welcome you to Christ Lutheran Church! We are a community of people sharing God's love through Christ and growing together in faith.

We celebrate all the ways we are made in the image of God, seeking to see God in everyone. We honor and respect each person's age, ethnicity, family composition, gender identity, gender expression, life history, mental well-being, physical ability, relationship status, sexual orientation, skin color, and socioeconomic standing. Together, we strive to love and serve our neighbor and all creation, including working toward racial and social justice. We would love to walk with you on this creative adventure* of faith, grace, and love.

** The first sermon ever preached at Christ Lutheran was titled "A Call to Creative Adventure."*

ABOUT WORSHIP

We gather to worship weekly to hear and remember our shared hope: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ makes all things new, even us.

You will find everything that happens in worship printed in this bulletin, with hymns found in the red hymnals ("ELW") in the seats in front of you.

If you have a prayer request, note it on a yellow card from the seatback holder and pass it to an usher; the other side is for any information you would like about Christ Lutheran. Please feel welcome to remain seated as necessary during the service.

CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME IN CHURCH!

God's people come in all shapes and sizes – it is a gift to the whole community when the smallest of us are present! Sitting with parents and learning to treasure times of worship is the foundation for helping build a growing faith in a child's life. There's some noise and movement that we expect from little ones - feel free to make use of the **activity bags, doodle pads, bookshelf in the overflow area and cry room at the back of the sanctuary** as needed. Whatever sacrifice of energy and effort you make to include your children in worship is multiplied as the good news of God's love takes root in their lives!

WHEN NURSERY CARE IS NEEDED DURING WORSHIP

A fully equipped and staffed Nursery is available for both infants and toddlers during all services. The Nursery is located west of our gathering area in **Room 110**.

RESTROOMS

Men's and women's restrooms off the Gathering Area and Church Hall have changing tables, as does the all-gender restroom near the nursery. A second all-gender restroom is through the Vestry off the East hallway, past the Welcome Center.

HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

Our services are on video, and occasional photographs are taken for our website and e-mail news. If you have concerns, please speak to a church staff member.

Hearing assistance devices are available to those who need help with listening to the service and are located at the entrance to the sanctuary, or please see an Usher for assistance.

A Reminder: Please turn off all cell phones during worship services.

God's glory is revealed in the reading of scripture. People stand at attention. People weep. People prostrate themselves in prayer. The unity of the church is another reflection of God's glory. Most gloriously, the promises of God are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Gather round. Listen up. Glimpse the glory of God.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Cantilene in F

Rheinberger

WELCOME

If you are joining us for the first time, welcome! We'd love to meet you, or if there's anything you'd like to know about the ministry of Christ Lutheran Church, please consider [filling out a Connection Card online](#) (you can point your phone at the graphic to the right) or using a yellow Connection Card in the pew holders.



***Prayer requests** can be posted to the livechat or use a yellow Prayer Request (on the backside of the Connection Card) and give them to an usher.*

*If you are worshipping with us via livestream, consider **preparing your space for Communion**: light a candle (if appropriate and safe), and have a plate with bread/cracker/tortilla and a cup for wine or grape juice (or an empty cup as a sign Jesus is sufficient in one or both elements).*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
our creator,
our protector,
our wellspring of life.
Amen.

Trusting that God receives our words and the meditations of our hearts, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Merciful God,
you speak blessing and compassion into the world.
Forgive us for the ways we act
with judgment, cruelty, or indifference.
We ignore the needs of our neighbors;
we resist your call to oppose injustice;
we give in to scarcity and fear;
we assume the worst about one another.
Cleanse us from our faults
and release us from their grasp.
Show us your lovingkindness.
Restore our hearts and repair your world,
that we may live in Christ's ways.
Amen.

God proclaims these words of assurance:
 "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.
 I have called you by name. You are mine."
 In ✠ Christ, you are forgiven.
 In the Spirit, you are made free.
 Refreshed by the waters of mercy,
 live anew as beloved children of God.
Amen.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE



- 1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
- 2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
- 3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:
 Son of God and gra-cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;
 Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

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.

Children: This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

God of freedom,
you break the seals
and let the Spirit flow;
make us impatient to greet
the time fulfilled,
the poor lifted up,
the oppressed set free
and your love made manifest
in Jesus Christ, the Anointed Servant.

Amen.

WORD

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

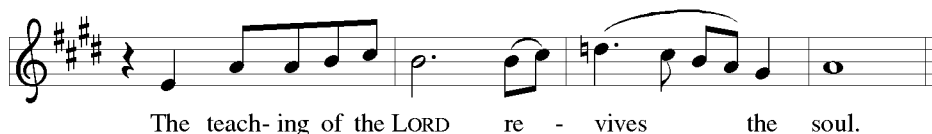
CHILDREN'S TIME

The assembly is seated as children come forward for a time together.

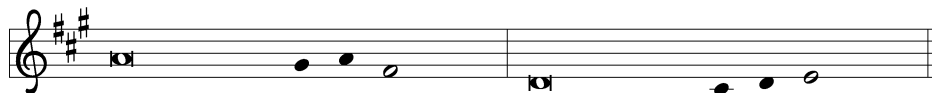
PSALM 19

The congregation is invited to sing the psalm refrain when indicated (R). Verses will be chanted alternately by the leader and the people.

Refrain



Psalm Tone



The heavens declare the glo-¹ry of God,
and the sky proclaims its¹ maker's handiwork.

²**One day tells its tale¹ to another,
and one night imparts knowledge¹ to another.**

³Although they have no¹ words or language,
and their voices¹ are not heard,

⁴**their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends¹ of the world,
where God has pitched a tent¹ for the sun.**

⁵It comes forth like a bridegroom out¹ of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to¹ run its course.

⁶**It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of¹ it again;
nothing is hidden from its¹ burning heat. R**

⁷The teaching of the LORD is perfect and re-¹vives the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom¹ to the simple.

⁸**The statutes of the LORD are just and re-¹joice the heart;
he commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light¹ to the eyes.**

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean and en-¹dures forever;
the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous¹ altogether.

¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, more than¹ much fine gold,
sweeter far than honey, than honey¹ in the comb. R**

¹¹By them also is your ser-¹vant enlightened,
and in keeping them there is ¹great reward.

¹²**Who can detect one's ¹own offenses?**

Cleanse me from my ¹secret faults.

¹³Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion ¹over me;
then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a ¹great offense.

¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable ¹in your sight,**

O LORD, my strength and ¹my redeemer. R

READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

The apostle and pastor Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to describe how intimately connected we are in the church. For this struggling congregation in Corinth, Paul delivers a vital message of unity that is a mark of the church today.

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ^{31a} But strive for the greater gifts.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

GOSPEL: Luke 4:14-21

Near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, he visits his hometown of Nazareth. In the words of Isaiah, he states and claims his identity, purpose, and mission.

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

The assembly is seated. Time for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW #710

Let Streams of Living Justice

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.



1 Let streams of liv - ing jus - tice flow down up - on the earth;
2 For heal - ing of the na - tions, for peace that will not end,
3 Your ci - ty's built to mu - sic; we are the stones you seek;



give free - dom's light to cap - tives, let all the poor have worth.
for love that makes us lov - ers, God grant us grace to mend.
your har - mo - ny is lan - guage; we are the words you speak.



The hun - gry's hands are plead - ing, the work - ers claim their rights,
Weave our var - ied gifts to - geth - er; knit our lives as they are spun;
Our faith we find in ser - vice, our hope in oth - ers' dreams,



the mourn - ers long for laugh - ter, the blind - ed seek for sight.
on your loom of time en - roll us till our thread of life is run.
our love in hand of neigh - bor; our home - land bright - ly gleams.



Make lib - er - ty a bea - con, strike down the i - ron pow'r;
O great weav - er of our fab - ric, bind church and world in one;
In - scribe our hearts with jus - tice; your way—the path un - tried;



a - bol - ish an - cient ven - geance: pro - claim your peo - ple's hour.
dye our tex - ture with your ra - diance, light our col - ors with your sun.
your truth—the heart of strang - er; your life—the Cru - ci - fied.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.*

PRAYERS

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

As your word is opened in our midst, we give thanks for all who share scripture: for parents, grandparents, and godparents; teachers and mentors; deacons, pastors, bishops, and scholars. Inspire passion for the stories of faith. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

As heavens declare your glory and the sky proclaims your work, we lift our voices in awe of quarks and atoms, vast stars and solar systems. Guide us to speak on behalf of your handiwork. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

As Jesus proclaimed life and freedom in his community, energize communities and nations to eliminate poverty, engage in prison ministry and transformative justice, and envision new ways of working together for your promised reign. Bless the lands, people, and churches of Cypress, Greece, and Turkey; guide and equip the ministry of the Ecumenical Patriarch leading our Orthodox siblings around the world. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

As your word and presence revive the soul, accompany all experiencing depression, anxiety, or eating disorders; be a source of strength for all affected by memory loss and their caregivers; draw near to all undergoing medical treatment or surgery. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

As we are made one body in baptism, strengthen all who serve. Renew and inspire all who use their gifts in this congregation, community, and the world. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

As our faith is strengthened by saints who have gone before us, we remember leaders of the church through the ages, especially Timothy, Titus, Silas, Lydia, Dorcas, Phoebe, and Thomas, and beloved friends and family who have died. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*We invite those worshipping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the chat, and for those in person we turn to offer them our greeting of peace before sharing a sign of peace with one another: **Peace be with you!***

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

OFFERING

This congregation serves our neighbors, community, and the world through the participation and support of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with

*1) First Contact Porter County facebook.com/firstcontactportercounty and
2) the Christ Lutheran Mike Steiner Benevolence Fund.*

If you wish to give electronically, use the QR code, browse to our secure on-line portal at clcvalpo.org/give or use [our CLC app](#) (download at clcvalpo.org/app).



OFFERTORY (8:00 am):

Allegro

Carvalho

OFFERTORY ANTHEM (10:30 am):

Go Not Far From Me, O God

Zingarelli

Go not far from me, O God; cast me not away in the time of age. Forsake me not when my strength faileth. O let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, that I may sing Thy glory and honor all the day long. O let my mouth be filled with Thy praise.

OFFERING PRAYER

The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

God of grace,

**your love reaches to the heavens,
and your abundance to the depths of the seas.**

Bless what we offer to your service:

our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts.

**Let us overflow with gratitude and generosity,
now and always.**

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.

The pastor continues the prayer then all join in singing:

SANCTUS

(An ancient practice invites us to make the sign of the cross in honor of Jesus at the words "Blessed is he.")



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n 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.

TABLE PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

Children: The Spirit makes us one. We 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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The joy of the Lord is our strength.
Come, eat this meal of gladness.
Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION

*The assembly is seated. The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:*

The body of Christ, given for you.
Amen (receive the bread)

The blood of Christ, shed for you.
Amen (receive the cup)

In-person distribution: When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. WINE is lighter-colored and GRAPE JUICE is dark; wine is received either by Common Cup or from individual cups in the trays. USED GLASSES are placed in the basket located near the ramp. GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE, please indicate to the server that you require this.

LAMB OF GOD



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.



Refrain



One bread, one bod-y, one Lord of all; one cup of



bless-ing which we bless, and we, though man-y



through-out the earth, we are one bod - y in this one Lord.



1 Gen - tile or Jew, ser - vant or free,
 2 Man - y the gifts, man - y the works,
 3 Grain for the fields, scat-tered and grown,



Refrain

wom-an or man, no more.
 one in the Lord of all.
 gath-ered to one for all.

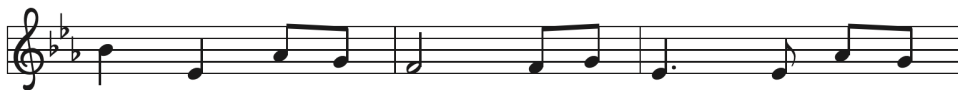
Text: John Foley, SJ, b. 1939

Music: ONE BREAD, ONE BODY, John Foley, SJ

Text and music © 1978 John B. Foley, SJ and OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved. Used by permission.



1 Loaves were bro - ken, words were spo - ken by the
 2 Loaves were bro - ken, words were spo - ken in a
 3 Loaves are bro - ken, words are spo - ken, as in
 4 By the loaves you break and give us, send us



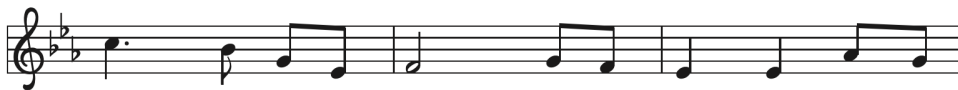
Gal - i - le - an shore. Je - sus, Bread of life from
 qui - et room one night. In the bread and wine you
 faith we gath - er here. Je - sus speaks a - cross the
 in your name to share bread for which the mil - lions



heav - en, was their food for - ev - er - more.
 gave them, Christ, you came as Light from Light.
 a - ges; "I am with you; do not fear!"
 hun - ger, words that tell your love and care.

Refrain

By your bod - y bro - ken for us, by your



wine of life out - poured, Je - sus, feed a - gain your



peo - ple. Be our Host, our Life, our Lord.

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., 1923–2007

Music: JOYOUS LIGHT, Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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Music © 1987 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands as the minister continues.
 The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourishing God,
at this table you have refreshed us
with holy gifts of food and drink.
Strengthen us for service,
and send us out to embody your good news
of liberation and healing for the sake of the world.
In the name of Christ we pray,
Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

The assembly is seated as brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

BLESSING

The Spirit of the triune God
✠ bless you with joy,
anoint you with compassion,
and send you in love.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW #551

The Spirit Send Us Forth to Serve

1 The Spir - it sends us forth to serve; we go in
 2 We go to com - fort those who mourn and set the
 3 We go to be the hands of Christ, to scat - ter
 4 Then let us go to serve in peace, the gos - pel

Je - sus' name to bring glad tid - ings
 bur - dened free; where hope is dim, to
 joy like seed and, all our days, to
 to pro - claim. God's Spir - it has em -

to the poor, God's fa - vor to pro - claim.
 share a dream and help the blind to see.
 cher - ish life, to do the lov - ing deed.
 pow - ered us; we go in Je - sus' name.

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: CHESTERFIELD, attr. Thomas Haweis, 1734–1820

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Children join the pastors to send us in mission.

DISMISSAL

Children: Go in peace. Live in hope.

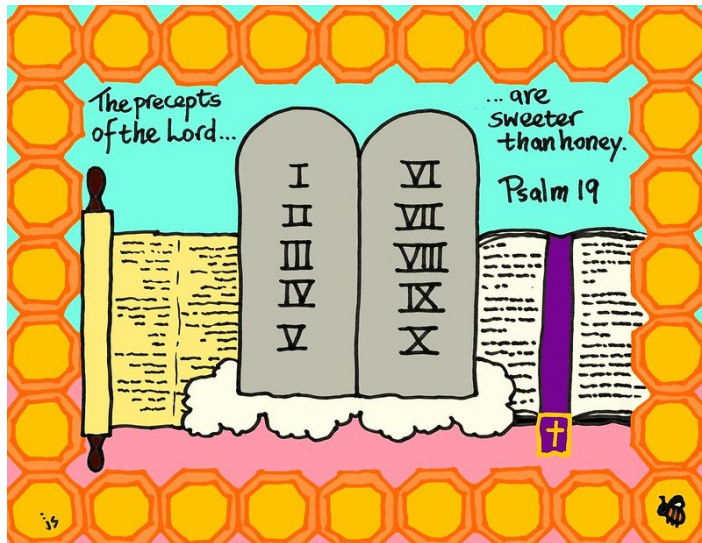
Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Psalm XIX

Marcello

As worship concludes we move to the Gathering Place, where we are invited to greet one another and share in fellowship.



Worship Leaders

Acolyte	<u>8:00 a.m.</u> Olivia Hernandez	<u>10:30 a.m.</u> Lukas Graber
Lector	Mark Kretzmann	Doug Schmidt
Prayer Assistant	Betty Luckett	Dana Abbring
Communion Assistants	Darla Hernandez Barbara Clements	Amy Knauff Holly Knauff
Ushers	Vickie Copeland Gregg Copeland	
Sound/Light	Lance Nolting	Tony Reinhold
Video/Livestream	-----	
Pastors	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Director of Music Ministries	Brian Bartusch	
Worship Participants	Sanctuary Choir (10:30 a.m. service) Melissa Summerville, cantor	
Communion Baker	Marilyn McGawn	
Communion Table	Terry Albrecht Barb Clements Helen Arvidson	Marla Niksch Lori Schwartz Marilyn McGawn

Stewardship Snippet

Psalm 19:9b, 10: The ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey.

Stewardship is all about priorities and values. What do we prize above all else?

Generous steward/disciples value the teachings of God that guide us to fulfilled lives.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye.**

We are thankful for:

- the 2,000-year presence and witness of the church in Asia Minor (now Türkiye, Cyprus, and Greece) – the region in which St Paul and other apostles first planted the seeds of the Christian faith – and for how Greek culture influenced the early church
- the Church Fathers who came from this area, along with many men and women who were Christian martyrs, and where seven ecumenical councils were convened
- the pioneering work of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in quest of Christian unity and for protection of the environment
- those who have reached out to assist people who have fled to, and through, these lands.

We pray for:

- the healing of memories and wounds inflicted by early 20th century genocides of Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian communities, and for current tensions in these lands
- enhanced respect for all minority groups and their claims,
- those who work for justice and reconciliation
- the people who struggle because of economic and political crises in these countries more stable democratic governments that further the good of all.

COMMEMORATIONS **Week of January 26**

January 26

Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries

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.

January 27

Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith

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.

January 28

Thomas Aquinas, teacher, died 1274

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.

Praised by Everyone

Jesus' ministry began in triumph. He had endured the testing in the wilderness and emerged victorious, ready to begin his good work in the community. One of the first places he stopped was in the synagogues, teaching in such a way that he "was praised by everyone" (Luke 4:15). One day, upon reading from Isaiah, Jesus revealed himself as the one who would bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recover the sight of people who were blind, free those who were oppressed, and proclaim the Lord's favor. Alleluia!

As followers of this very same Jesus, we know that God is still at work accomplishing these glorious tasks in our communities. We also know people who long for us, Jesus' followers full of the Holy Spirit, to bring good news to the poor.

How are we, members of the body of Christ, called to be in such a deep relationship with our neighbors that they share with us their greatest needs? Have we established such profound trust that they are willing to allow us to accompany them as God produces solutions sufficient to their greatest crises?

We have the most exhilarating mission—to proclaim the Lord's favor in the neighborhood! We get to remind people that they are not forgotten. How we do this in our own contexts is as various as the number of churches represented around the world. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to Christian ministry. But in all cases, we are called to invite everyone to praise Jesus and live into his mission of freedom.

As we gather each week for word and sacrament, may we be filled with the Holy Spirit as we pray that Jesus' fame will spread into "all the surrounding country" (Luke 4:14), as our neighbors experience God's good work through each of us. Holy Spirit, reveal to us new ways to accompany our neighbors in this Epiphany season.

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Portions from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* by Steven Shakespeare.