

BELLWETHER

January 2026 V32 no.1

Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Haines City FL

The bellwether is one that takes the lead or sets an example.



901 Scenic Hwy, Haines City, FL

Dear Lamb of God Family:

Grace and peace to you in this holy season.

As Christmas draws near, we pause again before the mystery and the miracle at the heart of our faith: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." God did not remain distant but chose to come close, to be born into the ordinary, the fragile, and the real. This is the good news of Christmas: Emmanuel, God with us.

For some, this season is filled with joy, laughter, and familiar traditions. For others, it carries grief, weariness, or longing. Wherever you find yourself this Christmas, please know this: Christ meets us exactly where we are. The light of Bethlehem shines not only in moments of celebration, but also in the quiet places of our hearts that ache for hope.

This year, I am especially grateful for you, your faithfulness, your prayers, your generosity, and your love for one another. In a world that often feels divided and hurried, you have borne witness to Christ through compassion, service, and perseverance. You have reminded me that the church is not a building or a program, but a people shaped by love.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we remember that God's good news first came to the least likely shepherds in the fields, a young mother, a weary world longing for peace. May that same good news take flesh in us today, as we extend mercy, practice kindness, and live as bearers of Christ's light.

My prayer for you this Christmas is simple and deep: that you may know the nearness of God, the peace that passes understanding, and the joy that no darkness can overcome. May the love of Christ fill your homes and hearts, now and always. Wishing you many blessings,

Pastor Greg

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN 901 Scenic Drive, Haines City, FL phone: (863) 421-2811

<https://lambofgodhainescity.com/>

Office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

My Sister's Closet Boutique hours as posted.

Lamb of God Community Food Pantry hours by appointment.

Service in English at 10am on Sunday, Service in Spanish at 11:45am on Sunday

Online service streamed at 10am via YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0ps8yFfbmFCVw-PCkWATow>



Lisette is now employed part time, T, W, & TH from 9-5. Outside of those hours, please leave a message on the church phone system (863) 421-2811.

Tom and I are happy to be back in Florida and here at Lamb of God. I volunteered to cover the office during the mornings last week while Lisette was on a much-needed vacation. She returns this week to reduced hours and employed part-time. She will be in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday only and from 9-5. If you have questions or comments, please call the office or talk with a council member. It's a new year and a new look for the Bellwether. Please let me know you are receiving this and if there are things you like, think you'd like changed, its length, font size, or anything else.

Thanks, *David* (Davidreedy146@Outlook.com)

The East Light of Epiphany

Behold, the Lamb of God

Everything feels new as the season of Epiphany begins. A new year is before us, 2026! There is a new month, January opens like a gift in our Florida home. Soon, a new pastor! There is also a new Gospel that we will use for our liturgy and preaching. We call this lectionary year, "the year of Matthew."

Yet the newest thing of all is not any of these. It is our Lord, Jesus Christ. Having just celebrated His birth at Christmas, we now come again to our God who meets us in the manger. We come as the three wise men once did, journeying from distant lands asking their faith-filled question to King Herod: "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:1). They did not yet know that Herod was jealous of the little child Jesus and feared losing his own crown to the promised "ruler of Judah." So they spoke simply and faithfully: "We have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2).

Ever since then, Jesus has been called the "Star of the East"—the Ruler of Judah and the One the whole world has awaited. Jesus has arrived! He is our Light! No other light will ever shine so brightly, and no other star will ever take his place. We do not worship the kings of this world, like Herod; we worship Jesus alone. Yet the rulers of this world do not like to be put beneath Christ. How can a little baby in a manger be the great ruler of God's people, Israel, and the king over the whole world?



But even Herod was forced to turn to the Bible to answer the wise men's question: Where is the king of the Jews to be found? He gathered the chief priests and scribes and asked, "Where does the Bible say this great King will be born?"

Remember this: If you ever want to find the child Jesus, then you must go to where His Word is. Do not allow anyone to lead you elsewhere. There, in the Scriptures, God gives His promise through the prophet Micah (5:2):

"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel".

This promise had long been forgotten. Little Bethlehem, the city of David, seemed too small to matter. Yet the wise men went where the Word led them—and there they found our Lord, our King, the Ruler of the whole world, lying in swaddling clothes in a manger bed.

Like the Magi, believe God's word when he makes a promise to you and follow it alone. The Magi saw the star over Bethlehem, rejoiced, then went to the baby, with his mother, Mary, in complete and total faith that God's promise was true. There they "fell and worshipped him!" (Matthew 2:11).

They then poured out their gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh--the very reason we give gifts at Christmas. These wise men came from far away, with no words from God to cling to—until they heard the promise spoken through the prophet Micah. Suddenly, little Bethlehem is no longer little!

Do not be distracted by appearances—the poor mother, the manger, the lowly barn. Listen only to God's promise. There the great star is revealed: the Son of God, the Ruler of the world, given for you.

What if others in the world hate this child Jesus? What if the rulers like Herod seek to kill him? Never mind all that. Worship him as the Magi did—as the Epiphany, the One who has come down to find us and save us. He is the bright Light of the East.

God protected the wise men, sending angels to them in a dream, directing them to return home by another way, away from Herod's evil (Matthew 2:12). So it will be for you as well. Like Jesus, you will have enemies in this world who want to take your promise away. But when you come to church, we give you this Word from Christ that goes with you wherever you go.

The very next thing we hear in the Season of Epiphany, on the first Sunday after Epiphany, and in January, is the baptism of Jesus Christ. In that

baptism, the same Word that led the wise men to Jesus in Bethlehem is now spoken over Him by the Father, revealing Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan so that He might take our sins upon Himself and defeat them once and for all.

This means that when you come to church, God makes all things new. You will hear again what God did for you in your Baptism, with the same water and word by which Christ Himself was baptized. And if you are not baptized, we will baptize you.

In Baptism, you are given the Word of the Bible that leads to Christ, the very Word that led the magi to Christ. Hold fast to that Word, and do not be led astray by any other voice. The world, like Herod, will always try to turn hearts away from Christ's promise. But this Word was spoken over Jesus for our sake, and now, in this Epiphany season, we give it to you again:

"Whoever believes and is baptized, shall be saved!" (Mark 16:16).

That is your Epiphany Word. This is your guiding Star from the East. By this Word, you worship your Lord and bring Him gifts; your gold, frankincense, and myrrh; not to earn His favor, but in joy upon receiving the greatest gift of all: the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with the one, true King, Jesus Christ. In Him all things are made new for you, and by His Light you are led from death to life.

Pr. Beatrice B. D'Angelo



January 18 following the bilingual service at 10am. Please be sure to attend this brief meeting to be updated on recent changes and to meet the incoming council members for 2026.

Lamb of God outreach!

We are in the community and she found us.

From Lissette,

Today we were visited by Sheilkeela Gurley, a local resident, who generously brought in wonderful gifts for the Angel Tree gift drive as well as family laundry baskets. We were truly blessed by her kindness and generosity. During her visit, Joyce Albrecht took the time to show her all the other ministries that LOG offers, which was a great opportunity to share the heart of our mission. **"Keela" said thank you for the opportunity to give.**

BELLWETHER JANUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)

From one reader, a long time member who moved out of the area. I just wanted to share that you received special accolades from Mr. Bob Hudgins. He absolutely enjoys reading Lamb of God's monthly Bellwether and wanted to be sure we passed along his appreciation. Mr. and Mrs. Hudgins are no longer spending winters in Florida, but Bob mentioned how deeply connected he feels through the editorial work you do. As you know, Bob is a talented bass player, and both he and his wife were active in the choir, generously sharing their gifts with Lamb of God. They are now living in independent living in Maryland and truly cherish continuing to hear from us; and from any members who remember them. Warm regards from The Hudgins. Robert & Joanne Hudgins, 43 W. McKinsey #306, Severna Park, MD 21146

And now Thank You's and Special recognition

2025 Angel Tree Ministry

Lamb of God Family, Thank you for your generous spirit of giving to this year's Angel Tree Ministry. For the second year, we were pleased to partner with Master Deputy Sheriff Jordan Owens and the Polk County Sheriff's Office to support their organization's program for Christmas. We were given 14 families to sponsor for Christmas. As always, your response was tremendous. You loaded the Angel Tree with gifts of children's wishes, and filled baskets with self-care items and cleaning supplies for the families. Truly, the giving spirit, love and devotion to who GOD calls us to be lives in the hearts of our Lamb of God family.

THANK YOU!
Pam Callas and
Carol Vaughn, Angel Tree
Ministry Coordinators.



Jordan's wife
receives LOG
financial donations
from Pam and Carol



MDS Jordan (AKA
Santa) checks the
list, twice!

These photos are from the Angel Tree PSCO Distribution Event at the Brooks Eloise Resource Center December 17. LOG volunteers were Dawn Bockelman, Kathy Dierker, Pam Callas, LaMar Grafft, Jim & Kim Diefenbach, Pedro & Maritza Concepcion, Ruben Arocho Velazquez, and Carol Vaughn. All the families had given their permission to be photographed. It was a special evening enjoyed by all. It is a very special partnership that LOG has with Deputy Sheriff Jordan Owens, PSCO and the Brooks Eloise Resource Center.



Basket & Quilt Holiday Raffle Supporting Lamb of God

CONGRATULATIONS to all the raffle winners and THANK YOU to everyone who supported the holiday raffle/fundraiser. A special thank you to Brenda Valle for putting together all the fun and festive baskets and to our LOG quilters for making and donating the beautiful quilts.

The raffles raised \$441 in support of LOG.

The raffle winners were Maritza Ramirez, Mark Becker, Rodney Sondime, Daysi Diaz, Joni McLaughlin, JoAnn Knudson, and David Reedy.
Pam Callas and Carol Vaughn (Raffle Coordinators).

BELLWETHER JANUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)

THANK YOU! Volunteers helped decorate the narthex and sanctuary for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. We will need help again on the morning of Tuesday **January 13 starting at 9am** to take down and store the decorations, returning the chancel to the beautiful setting we have here at LOG. Please join us for an hour or so that morning! Additionally, for the week of Christmas, beautiful poinsettia were purchased by members. LOG could not be doing everything it does without having your support.



Carol and Pam decorate the tree (glad they were careful on that tall ladder!)



When they finished it looked so nice replete with 35 poinsettia plants.

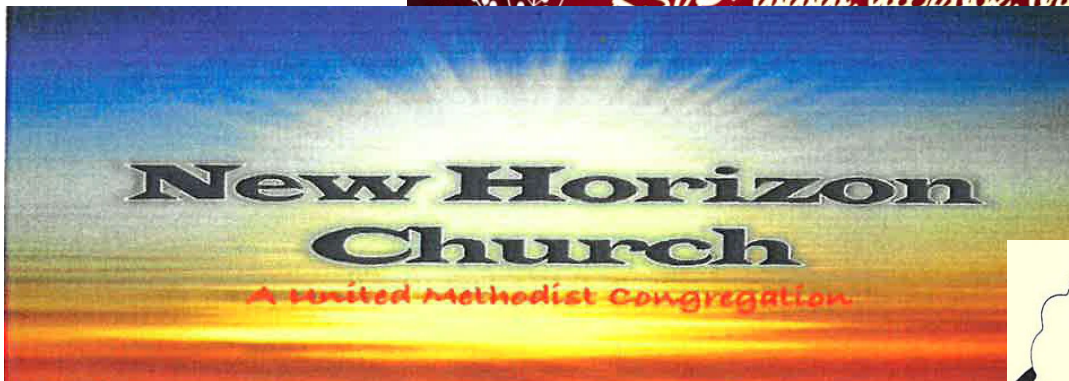


The altar area with the holy family and poinsettia.



Retired but still volunteering... Pastor Bockelman working on the beautiful manger scene at the back of the Sanctuary.

Unity in the community!
LOG volunteers were on hand to help serve hot chocolate for this event. One more place LOG friends support the community.



November 18, 2025

Lamb of God Lutheran Church
901 Scenic Highway
Haines City, Florida 33844

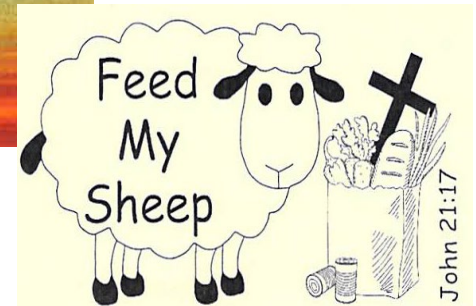
Dear Friends:

On behalf of New Horizon Church, the Unity in the Community Group and House Blest Food Pantry, I wish to extend our thanks for your generous cash donation for turkeys, along with boxes of macaroni and cheese. Your donation and support over these years demonstrate great things happen when we all work together.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank G. Adams'.

Reverend Frank G. Adams
Lead Pastor, New Horizon Church



LOG family members support House Blest Food Pantry by giving of time, finances, and food.

Come... See...

The Son Loves You...

And so do We!!!

BELLWETHER JANUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)

Do you remember back in October when we celebrated Breast Cancer Awareness?
We recognized the ladies and gentlemen
who beat breast cancer with beautiful handmade boas.
Also, our fundraiser was successful and has been recognized! YOU did it!

Lamb of God Lutheran Church of Haines City, Florida Inc.
901 Scenic Hwy
Haines City, FL 33844

Dear Sir or Madam,



Thank you to the entire team at Lamb of God Lutheran Church of Haines City, Florida Inc. for your support and generous donation on November 4, 2025 of \$270.00 in honor of all who are going through, survived, or have passed with breast cancer.

We are so grateful for your support of National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. Your gift provides help and inspires hope to those affected by breast cancer through critical early detection, education, and support services focused on our mission of Helping Women Now®.

Breast cancer affects 1 in 8 women in the United States, and we are grateful that you share our belief that no one should face breast cancer alone.

From all of us at NBCF, thank you for your generosity and for helping women at every step of the breast health journey.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Hail".

Kevin Hail
CEO

For your tax records, no goods or services were exchanged for your donation.

7460 Warren Pkwy, Ste 150 • Frisco, Texas 75034 • nbcf.org

A large, colorful graphic that says "THANK YOU!" in bold, block letters. Each letter is a different color: T (blue), H (purple), A (pink), N (orange), K (red), Y (yellow), O (green), and U (teal). The text is surrounded by small, colorful dots and confetti.

Did you know??? In 2025, LOG benefitted from Gifts in Kind (purchased by volunteers in support of church needs) of nearly \$5,000. We say THANK YOU to those who provided this so the costs do not come from church offering income.

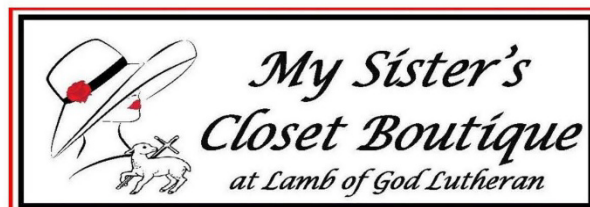
BELLWETHER JANUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)

Remember we opened MSCB to the community last month and were greatly received.

The donations you provide, which may not be used for MSCB or My Brother's Closet, go into the St. Pauly Clothing Shed off the parking lot.

Please be sure to continue your donations AND to tell your friends and neighbors that LOG accepts donations. While this is focused on supporting the community, between MSCB and St. Pauly Textile, LOG has financially benefited with nearly \$1,500 added to the budget, and not having to come from your financial donations to the church.

Thank you!!!



Happy Holidays!

We wanted to take a moment to express our sincere appreciation for your continued trust and support as we begin to round out the year. Your partnership means the world to us, and we are truly grateful for the opportunity to work with you and have you as a member of the St. Pauly Textile family.

At St. Pauly Textile Inc., our mission has always been to provide the best service and ensure every experience you have with us is positive and rewarding. Partners like you inspire us to keep improving and striving for excellence every day.

Thank you once again for partnering with us and for being such an important part of our community. We look forward to continuing to partner with you as we continue to grow and expand our family.

From our family to yours, we want to wish you all a happy holiday season!
Sincerely,

St. Pauly Textile Ownership



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Your LOG Council shared with the MSCB leadership the goal of including children's and men's items in addition to the original ministry of ladies. As such, then council member, Ruben Arocho Velazquez and his wife Marisol, took on the mantle of leadership for My Brother's Closet as a smaller subsidiary. In the months of November and December alone, five men were helped as they prepare for future job interviews while getting back on their feet after losing everything due to fires, homelessness, or incarceration. We thank them for their leadership and thank YOU for your continued donations.



After Oscar finished teaching the Spanish class, he stopped in to check out My Brother's Closet

A new set up with Ruben in My Brother's Closet



Lake Region Village
2025 Community Partner

Thank You For
Dedication & Support

LOG Treasurer Lynne Martin presented Lake Region Village with the 2025 Community Partner award. Warren Law and crew, including his wife Marleen, donate countless items of food and knitted pieces to not only LOG but two other local food pantries. We want to thank them for the regular donations which we use to support those seeking nourishment. Marleen and the knitters of LRV provided some of the boas we gave to Breast Cancer survivors in October.



The Gospel According to a Christmas Tree Cake

The Tree Shape —
Points upward because
our hope and help
come from above.

The White Icing —
A picture of grace
that covers us
completely.

The Red Swirl —
Christ's love and sacrifice
woven through everything.

The Layers Inside —
Life has layers; Jesus meets
us in every one.



"Taste and see that the LORD is good..."

January Celebrations

Lester (Butch) Albrecht	1/1
Richard Lounsbery	1/1
Jackson Eastridge	1/2
Philippa White	1/4
Qui Berner	1/7
Betty Smith	1/8
Emma Murphy	1/10
Carol Lounsbery	1/14
Rita Grafft	1/14
Walter Calero	1/17
Bob Smith	1/22
Debbie Burk	1/25
Judy Lindberg	1/25
LaMar Grafft	1/25
Sandi Barnhart	1/28
Dennis Martin	1/30



Jan 18
Julie and
Merlin Gorder



December 27, LOG supported LaMar and Rita Grafft to celebrate 55 years of marriage. They were blessed with a family gathering as well. The next day, Sunday December 28, their daughter was our lector, providing a very informed reading, and following the service one of their grandsons, who takes piano lessons, was invited to spend a little time at the organ to experience the differences in the feel of the keyboard (and pedals).



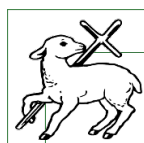
BELLWETHER JANUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)



Lamb of God member Bill Quinlan's latest book, *Recollections of A Rapsallion - Life & Times*, is now available online. The book soon will be available on loan from the Church Library. Sometimes peppered with humor, the book recounts his encounters with U.S. President George Hiram Walker Bush, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, actor and singer Harry Belafonte, and Hall-of Fame baseball player Joe DiMaggio. The book also includes discussion of his unauthorized visit to U.S. Vice-President Lyndon Johnson's office, his removal of U. S Senator Al Gore's wife "Tipper" from a certain leadership position she held in the mental health field, and a summary of his analysis on why homosexuality is justified by certain texts in the Holy Bible. Please reach out to Bill for more information.

Language Classes Resume January 10

After a short break for the holidays, the Lamb of God Languages Program will continue offering Spanish and English classes each week



Lamb of God
Languages Program

starting Saturday, January 10. Everyone is welcome, and classes are free of charge. Our only requirement from volunteer teachers and students is patience and a willingness to learn. As reported in the November newsletter, we received a grant of \$3,100 to purchase a smartboard for our classroom. A generous anonymous donor recently gave us an additional \$500 while another individual gave \$200 toward our goal of \$2,500 to complete the purchase and installation of this valuable educational tool. We're now very close to meeting our fundraising target and would love to start 2026 with this new technology installed in the classroom. Please consider making a donation to the Languages program. Your support, both monetary and in prayer, are greatly appreciated. God's work, our hands! *Philippa White*

The December average attendance was 99 each week with a total income of just over \$18,000. Online giving (Vanco) continues to grow however please use your designated envelopes for cash/checks placed in the offering plates. See Pam Thomas for your envelopes or contact the office for help with VANCO set up.

The LOG Bellwether from is published monthly. Please send information to the editor by the 20th of the month for possible inclusion in the subsequent issue. The editor uses davidreedy146@outlook.com for communication. Thanks go to Lissette Solano and Teresa Liberta for their regular submission of information and pictures.

Don't forget to "follow" LOG on Facebook and to "subscribe" to our YouTube channel.