

Epiphany of Our Lord

January 4, 2026 10:30 AM

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

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Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9am to 1pm

Tuesday and Thursday 12pm to 4pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

**Stand Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy*

PRELUDE *Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BRIEF ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

P: Heavenly Father, merciful and holy, in you we live and move and have our being. Look upon us, your children, the work of your hands. Forgive us all our offenses, and cleanse us from proud thoughts and empty desires. By your grace draw us near to you, our refuge and our strength and renew us in the power of your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

P: In the presence of God, who sees our hearts and our minds, who forgives all our sins, whose mercy endures forever, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection and confession of our sins before God and one another.

God of glory, God of peace, **we confess that we have shunned the light that reveals the truth about us. We cling to worldly things rather than sharing the gifts of this earth. We trust ourselves above all. Save your people, O God and free us to live boldly in the light of the grace and truth of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.**

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: Everything old has passed away; behold, everything has become new! The grace of God shines upon us, bringing salvation to the whole world. We are saved, our sins are washed away, not because of anything we have done, but according to God's mercy in Jesus Christ. Therefore, I announce the forgiveness of all your sins in the name of the Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

* **GATHERING HYMN** “As With Gladness Men of Old”

LBW 82

GREETING:

P: Christ is born: Alleluia, alleluia! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: 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. **C: Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ²For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. ³Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. ⁵Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: 72: 1-4, 10-12

- ¹Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's son;
²that he may rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;
³that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
⁴Let him defend the needy among the people,
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.
¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles pay tribute,
and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.
¹¹May all kings bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.
¹²For the king delivers the poor who cry out in distress,
the oppressed, and those who have no helper.

SECOND READING: Philippians 3: 7-15

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

The congregation is invited to stand.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“The First Noel” (verse 5)

LBW 56

*Then entered in those Wise Men three, Full reverently upon the knee,
And offered there, in His presence, Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.*

Refrain *Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.*

***GOSPEL: Matthew 2: 1-12**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

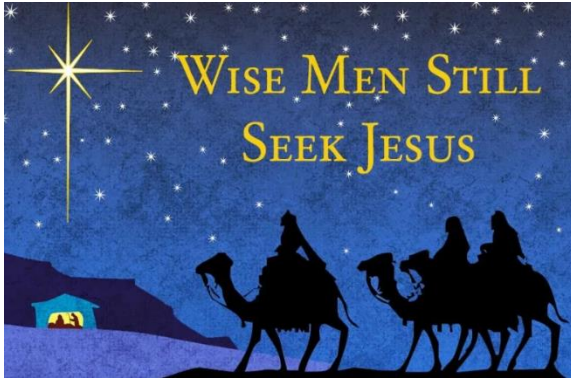
In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.' ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ!**

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON



“Following the Light of Christ into the New Year!”

Pastor Doug Hefner

***HYMN OF THE DAY:** **“We Three Kings of Orient Are”**

WOV 646

***THE APOSTLES’ CREED**

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again 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.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition.

P: Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

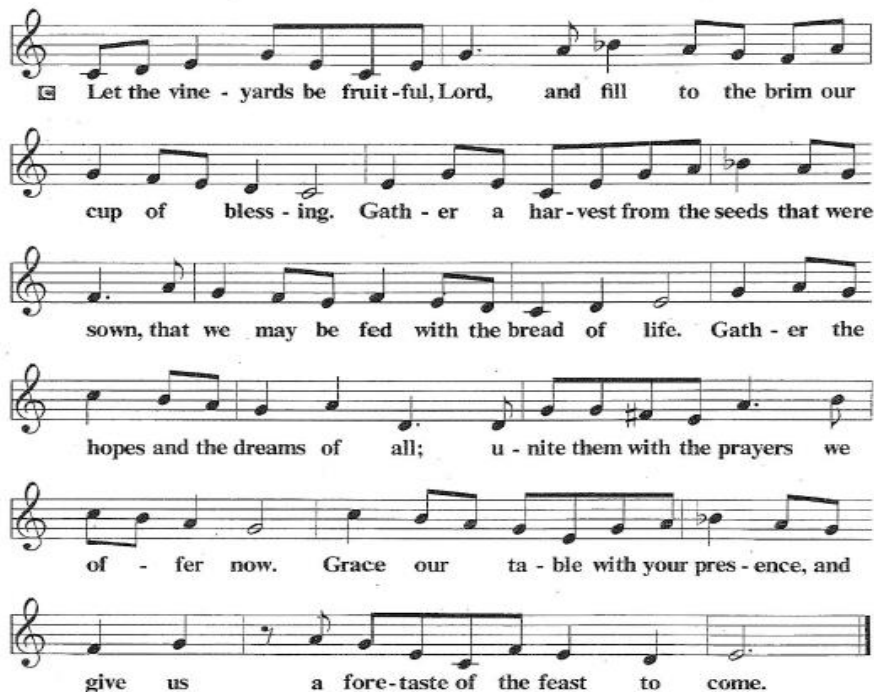
P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

Worshippers may greet one another with “the Peace of Christ.”

The assembly may be seated.

* **OFFERING** In response to God's blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord
HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

* **OFFERTORY** **Let the Vineyards**



* **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: God of new life and new beginnings, **C: Through your love you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we here offer to you, to be light and love for the world as you call us to be agents of your grace, through the one who gave himself for us, Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

* **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

LBW PG. 68

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

* **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. C: **Thanks be to God!**

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion.

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of God



The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace." The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a final cadence on the last staff.

The congregation is invited to stand.

* **COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: 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.

C: Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

“Arise Your Light Has Come”

WOV 652

***DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffrey Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Glenda Childers, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Larry Heavner, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Tim Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane

Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken & Tirzah Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Ashlee Bumgardner, Bill Bumgarner & family, Jessica Cassells & family, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, family of Tim Childers, family of Wendy Cloninger, Sonya Elliott & family (car accident, recovering at home now), Ryan McMullen & family, David Moses, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Scott Speagle, and Todd Wilfong. Prayers for world peace and for our church, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces. Prayers also for an unspoken prayer request and for visiting family.

HAPPY JANUARY BIRTHDAY TO:

January 4 – Stormy Shull

January 9 – Lula Ingle

January 13 – Sheila Drum

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: Celebration of the Epiphany of Our Lord

9:30am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

Tuesday: Feast of the Epiphany

Wednesday: 12 Noon – Fred T. Foard Seniors Luncheon at Hebron UMC (Vale)

6:30pm – Evening Vespers

Saturday: 9:00am – Grace Prayer Breakfast at Four Peas in a Pod (Conover)

10:30am – Unhanging of the Greens

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wed, 1/7/26 Fred T Foard Senior Luncheon All Invited 12 noon at Hebron United Methodist Church – Vale

Sun, 1/11/26 The Baptism of Our Lord (Matthew 3:13-17)

Sun, 1/18/26 Grace hosts first service of Week of Christian Unity at 6pm, Dinner following (we provide soup, sandwiches, dessert afterwards)

Wed, 1/21/26 Grace Senior Luncheon and Program 12 noon All Welcome

Wed, 1/21/26 Ebenezer hosts Christian Unity Service at 6pm, Dinner following

Sun, 1/25/26 Daniels Lutheran hosts Christian Unity Service at 6pm, Dinner following

Sun, 2/8/26 Friendship Sunday, Everyone asked to invite your friends to worship. We will have a special gift for friends who join us. Theme of the service and sermon will be about the blessings of Christian friendship!

Sun, 2/15/26 Transfiguration Sunday

Wed, 2/18/26 Ash Wednesday Service, Imposition of Ashes/Communion

Sunday School: We Continue “The Story” Finding Your Story in God’s Love Story!

The Story Bible Study gives us a way to journey from Genesis to Revelation together in 31 Bible Studies so everyone understands God’s story and how their story intersects with it. It is true that God’s Word, the Bible, is “The Greatest Story Ever Told” and it is an amazing story of God’s love for us! A Gallup survey reports the average American

household has four Bibles. However, research by [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#) (2008) found that only 16 percent of Americans read the Bible every day. At Grace we are hoping to reverse this trend! I believe that *The Story* is the right tool to increase Biblical literacy, helping readers understand God's story from Genesis to Revelation and how their own stories intersect with God's. We have finished the Old Testament, the first 21 Sessions. Starting on December 28 we will begin the New Testament with the following chapters: **New Testament: 22** The Birth of the King; **23** Jesus' Ministry Begins; **24** No Ordinary Man **25** Jesus, the Son of God; **26** The Hour of Darkness; **27** The Resurrection; **28** New Beginnings **29** Paul's Mission; **30** Paul's Final Days; **31** The End of Time. *The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:8*

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Board has called a special congregational meeting for Sunday, January 11th immediately following worship. The purpose of the meeting is to approve a bid from Precision Heating & Cooling to replace all inside and outside units for the main sanctuary building. The system has reached the end of its functional life and can no longer be patched. The bid will be explained and the congregation will be asked to vote to approve the expenditure in accordance with our Constitution.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Finance Committee will meet with the Board on Monday, January 12th at 6:00pm to hear a presentation from Fore Rembert of Benjamin F. Edwards Investments. Attendance by all officers of the Board is required. The regular monthly Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 19th at 6:00pm. The two meetings could not be combined due to a lengthy agenda for the regular Board meeting. Thank you in advance for participating!

Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace

Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard

Lector – Stormy Shull Youth Leader – Stormy Shull

Altar Preparation – Cindy Bivens

Communion Assistants – Sheila Drum & Sherry Biggerstaff

Ushers – Chris Jarrett & Jack Parris

Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Jeff Scronce

Listening for the Promise

Sola Publishing – Weekly Devotions

Feast of the Epiphany 2026

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“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.”

- Isaiah 60:1-6 -

This is a dark time of the year in Minnesota. Dark and bitterly cold. This is the time of year when those who are able flee to warmer places, where the sun shines hot, and doesn't set at 4:30 in the afternoon. And yet, when the sun does shine these days, it is blindingly bright as it reflects off the snow. At this time of year in Minnesota there is no middle ground between deep, gloomy darkness and blinding light.

As Isaiah offered his prophetic word, he was speaking to a people living in deep darkness. They were homeless, nationless, and, as far as they could tell, godless. Darkness had swallowed them up.

And then Isaiah brought this word, “Arise, shine, for your light has come.” The days of darkness would give way to the bright light of God's presence among his people. The darkness would be swallowed up by the light. The darkness would not last forever. The light of God's presence, meanwhile, is everlasting. It cannot be extinguished.

When we find ourselves in the midst of dark days, it can be difficult to see the light of God's presence. Sometimes that light is barely a flickering flame. Sometimes we can't even see a trace of that light, but only the shadows it casts. But God's promise in Jesus Christ is that the day is surely coming when you will arise to the full brightness of Christ's glorious presence. The day is surely coming when the darkness will be no more.

On this Day of Epiphany, we celebrate the revelation of Christ's presence in the world. We mark that moment when darkness was first sent on the run, when the light appeared on the scene in a new way, a way that could not be denied, could not be snuffed out.

Isaiah's call to his people rings through to us even down to this day. Arise, the light has come. It may not be obvious to you every moment of every day, but the glory of the Lord has risen upon you and will raise you to himself. That is the promise that banishes the darkness in our lives and in this world once and for all.