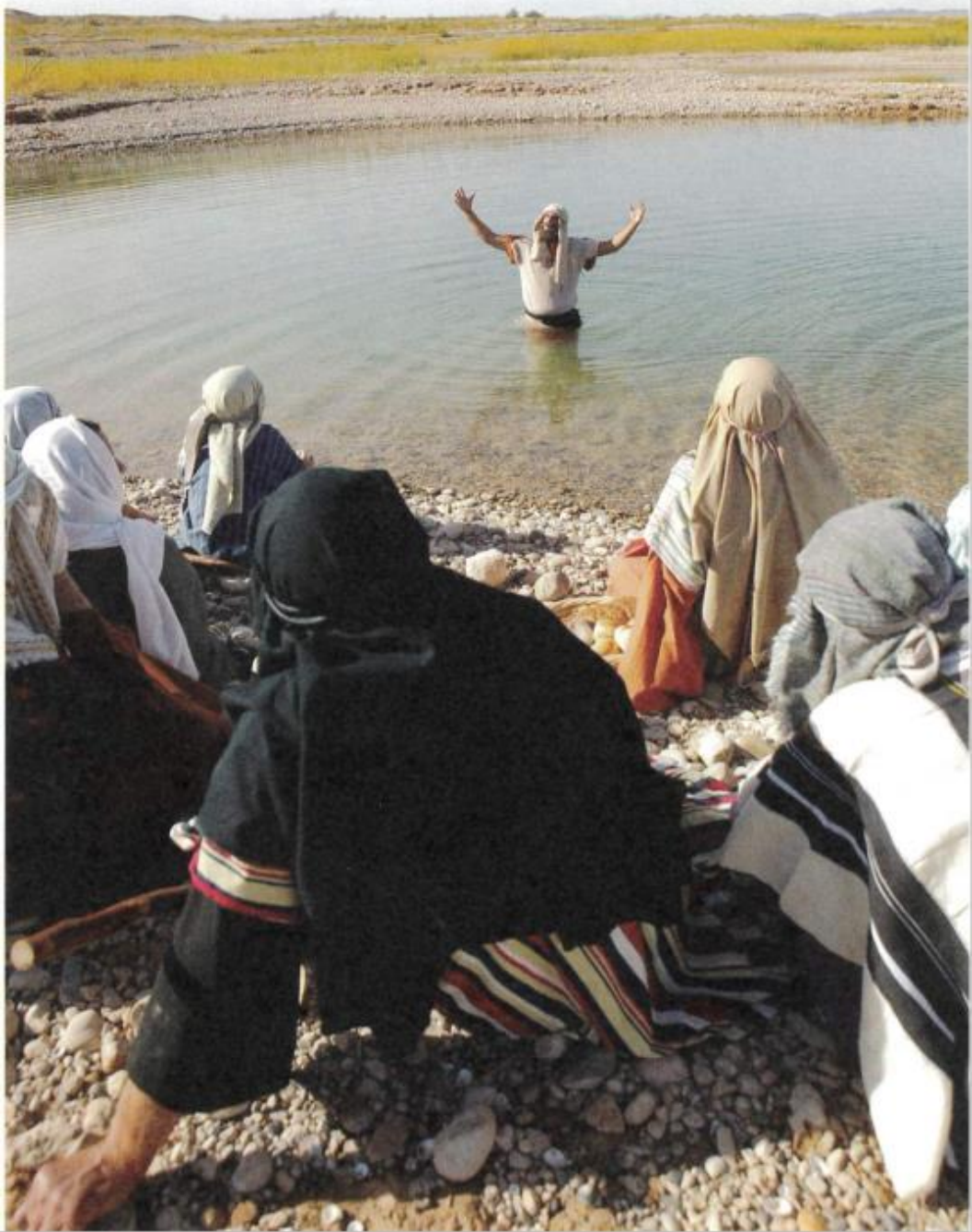


*Pure and blameless for the day of Christ*

PHILIPPIANS 1:10



# Second Sunday in Advent

December 8, 2024

## BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

3210 Maple Drive, Plover, Wisconsin 54467

Phone: Church 715-341-2898; Cell 715-498-0093

Website [www.beautifulsaviorploverwi.com](http://www.beautifulsaviorploverwi.com)

**Pastor David E. Ficken**

**Guest Pastor Mark Moss, LHF**

### Our Mission

“To Know Jesus and to Make Him Known”

### Our Vision

Educate, Equip and Encourage ourselves and our families through worship and study, and engage our community through discipleship, example and Acts of Kindness, using the unique gifts bestowed on each member of our congregation by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Worship Information

**Parents with Young Children:** We encourage families to worship together.

**Worship Bulletin:** Our order of service is printed out in your worship folder.

**Worship Form:** There are 5 “Movements” in our Worship.


- God grants us the gift of forgiveness.
- God speaks to us from His Word.
- God receives our offerings and prayers.
- God offers us His real presence in Holy Communion.
- God blesses us and sends us out.

**Communion:** Please read the Statement of Communion below.

(If you are **gluten intolerant** please speak with Pastor or an elder prior to the worship service so we can accommodate you.)

### STATEMENT OF COMMUNION

#### BECAUSE THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES THAT:

- We are all sinners in need of forgiveness.
  - Jesus is our only Savior from sin through His death and resurrection.
  - The True Body and Blood of Christ is present in the Sacrament of the Holy Communion
-  **Please see Pastor if you have any questions about this or do not believe in the Lord’s Supper in this way. You are welcome to come forward for a blessing if you are not communing.**
- **Please see Pastor if there is something going on in your life that needs the attention of Christ in private confession *and* absolution.**

**AS WE GATHER--** In this month of December, we find ourselves getting ready and preparing for many things, such as gatherings with family and friends, gifts to get and give to others, traditional treats to be made, and decorations for the season. The foremost preparation, of course, is for our Savior’s birth. Today we are reminded of another time of preparation that would be after Jesus’ birth and prior to His earthly ministry—that of John the Baptist, who would prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our busy times of preparing to celebrate this season, today we draw our focus on and give thanks for the one who would raise valleys, level mountains, and make straight the paths for Him.

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Mark Twain is sometimes attributed with the quote “Never put off till tomorrow what may be done the day after tomorrow just as well.” Though a humorous take on the problem of procrastination, there is a reality to the fact that we often are people who put things off until later, or even until it is too late. Thankfully, procrastinating is not an attribute of the one true God. As we focus on the Epistle from Philipians 1, we are reminded that the Lord always completes what He begins at His time. Even as we continue in our Advent season, we are assured that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Galatians 4:4–5).

.....

**WITNESS AND OUTREACH--** Luke 3:1-14: John the Baptist was given a message to prepare the way for the coming Christ. This message shared the truth of repentance and forgiveness with all people. Here in worship, we have repented of our sins of thought, word, and deed and received full and free forgiveness through Christ. This forgiveness equips us to share peace and pardon with those in our lives who have not yet received Jesus Christ. Through our witness sharing the life, death and resurrection of Christ, may others rejoice in the opportunity to repent of their sin and receive forgiveness through Jesus.

**WELCOME to GUESTS & VISITORS**

Hymns will be from the Lutheran Service Book (LSB).

**✠ PREPARATION ✠**

**INVOCATION**

**Pastor:** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**People:** Amen.

**OPENING HYMN** “Come, Thou Almighty King” LSB 905

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*John 1:5, 9; 14:27; Luke 2:14; Psalm 4:6–8*

Pastor: We light our second Advent candle as we prepare for the arrival of the Savior, who would come to His people in human flesh and who promises to come again. In a world of darkness, a light shines. Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

**People: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Pastor: The second Advent candle has been known by a few different names, including the Bethlehem candle, the preparation candle, and the candle of peace. As we await the angelic proclamation of “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased,” we rejoice in the present reality of the peace Christ has assured in and through Him until perfect and eternal peace is ushered in upon His return. In this season, and until that day, we find comfort in His assurance: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

**People: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

Pastor: Guided by the light of peace, we respond with the psalmist: “There are many who say, ‘Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of Your face upon us, O Lord!’”

**People: You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.**

Pastor: In peace I will both lie down and sleep;

**People: for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”**

*Two Advent candles are lit.*



### HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” Sts. 3-4: LSB 357

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION *Psalm 124:8; 130:3–4;*

*Luke 3:5–6; Philippians 1:6*

Pastor: Malachi prophesies about and John the Baptist fulfills the call of the one who would prepare the way for the Lord. John the Baptist would preach a Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We, too, seek the forgiveness our Lord has promised, and our Savior gives us assurance as we come before Him in humble repentance.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**People: who made heaven and earth.**

Pastor: If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

**People: But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared.**

Pastor: Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and prepare again to receive Him who came in our flesh, comes through His Word and in His body and blood given and shed for us, and promises to come again, let us stand before Him in humble and contrite confession.

**People: We are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by the things we have done and left undone, and we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition.**

Pastor: We have not loved the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength,

**People: and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.**

Pastor: We justly deserve present and eternal punishment, but for the sake of Jesus Christ, we pray:


**People: Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Pastor: Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May He who began a good work in you bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**People: Amen.**

### ✠ WORD ✠

 **HYMN OF PRAISE** "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" LSB 803

### SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Philippians 1:9-11*

**Pastor:** Let us pray. Prepare our hearts room, O Lord, to receive with peace and joy the Savior made flesh, that at Your time of completion we may be found with faith and trust remaining in You,

**People:** **with knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God;**

**Pastor:** through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People:** **Amen.**

## FIRST READING *Genesis 1:1-5* (The Creation of the World)

**Lector:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM *Psalms 119:105-112*

## EPISTLE *Ephesians 5:8-15*

**Lector:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE



**ALLELUIA** "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" LSB 493, v.6

O risen Christ, ascended Lord,

All praise to You let earth accord: Alleluia, alleluia!

You are, while endless ages run, With Father and with Spirit one.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

## HOLY GOSPEL *John 8:12-21* (I Am the Light of the World)

**Pastor:** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the eighth chapter.

**People:** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

(The Gospel is read.)

**Pastor:** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People:** **Praise to You, O Christ.**



**HYMN** "O Christ, Our True and Only Light" LSB 839

**SERMON**      “The Light of God”

**CREED**      *Apostles’ Creed*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**      *Philippians 1:3–11*

**Pastor:**      Let us pray for the church, for the people of God, and for all people according to their needs.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gathering of us together around Word and Sacrament, as You call, gather, and enlighten us through Your Spirit. Keep Your church united in truth, as Christ has completed His work for the sake of humanity as we await His return. As You continue to work in us and through us Your grace and mercy, empower us by Your Spirit to live holy lives according to Your will and to live as Your witnesses among our neighbors, coworkers, and community. As we pray to You now, we also pray with Paul upon ourselves and all believers who call upon Your name:

**People:**      **“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”**

**Pastor:**      Be with all who bear Your Word, including those who serve as missionaries both near and far. Grant open ears and eager hearts to receive the good news of a Savior given, and forgiveness assured. For all who face trials, persecution, and even death for confessing Your name, grant a steadfastness of faith even in the most dire times.

**People:**      **“It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and**

**confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”**

**Pastor:** For all who are sick, lonely, and in need of comfort, we lift them up to You, [*including . . .*]. According to Your will, grant healing. According to Your promises, remain with them with the comfort and peace of Your presence in times of affliction. Be with doctors, nurses, and medical staff as they use the gifts and abilities given to them. Help us and others to serve as Your instruments that we may show compassion in times of need, speak words of hope in times of hopelessness, and serve according to needs had in times of helplessness. For all people, as we prepare to receive and rejoice in the Savior given and born for us, keep us prepared for the day of His coming again.


**People:** **“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”**

*Additional petitions may follow.*

**Pastor:** Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**People:** **Amen.**

**OFFERTORY** (in offering plate at entrance to sanctuary)

 **HYMN** “We Give Thee But Thine Own” Sts. 1: LSB 781  
We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

**✠ SACRAMENT ✠**

**PREFACE** 2 Timothy 4:22

**Pastor:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Pastor:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** **We lift them to the Lord.**

**Pastor:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People:** **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**



**THE WORDS OF OUR LORD**    *Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24;  
Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25*

**Pastor:**            Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

**PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST**    *1 Corinthians 11:26;  
Revelation 22:20*

**Pastor:**            As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

**People:**            **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

**Pastor:**            O Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**LORD’S PRAYER**    *Matthew 6:9–13*

**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.**

**PAX DOMINI**

**Pastor:**            The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**People:**            **And also with you. Amen.**



**AGNUS DEI** “Lamb of God” LSB 198

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,

That takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,

That takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God,

That takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy Peace. Amen.

## COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

See LSB 329: Christian Questions with Their Answers prepared by Dr. Martin Luther for those who intend to go to the Sacrament.



*Note:* These questions and answers are no child's play, but are drawn up with great earnestness of purpose by the venerable and devout Dr. Luther for both young and old. Let each one pay attention and consider it a serious matter; for St. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter six: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked."

**NOTE: Pastor will come around again, offering the COMMON CUP.**

### SPECIAL MUSIC (during Communion distribution)

#### DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

"Prepare the Royal Highway"	LSB 343
"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"	LSB 347
"When All the World Was Cursed"	LSB 346

## COMMUNION DISMISSAL

**Pastor:** Now this, the Body and Blood of Christ, crucified, risen and ascended, strengthen you, nourish you and keep you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. Depart in peace.

**People:** Amen.

## POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING

**Pastor:** Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,

**People:** for His steadfast love endures forever.

## BENEDICTION *Numbers 6:24–26*

**Pastor:** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**People:** Amen.

#### HYMN "Lift High the Cross" LSB 837

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SENDING

**Pastor:** Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

**People:** Thanks be to God.

**NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** Zephaniah 3:14-20

**EPISTLE** Philippians 4:4-7

**HOLY GOSPEL** Luke 7:18-28

**TITHE & OFFERING – our sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord**

Our “tithes” are our first fruits returned to God in proportional, joyful, thankful and faithful response to His grace. “Offerings” are special gifts for ministries, memorials and needs over and above the tithe.

*(If you are a guest, we welcome you as a guest. Please do not feel obligated to give an offering unless you feel moved to do so by the Spirit.)*

**November Financial Recap:**

November Givings (Thank you!)	\$18,666.95
Monthly Need:	<u>\$17,640.16</u>
Overage:	\$ 1, 276.79

Parking Lot Project: \$62,834.00 Goal: \$100,000
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LWML Loose Change 12/1/24: \$10.30 SCRIP Profit 11/25/24-12/1/24: \$13.75
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**Life Quotes: December 8** “If heaven had been our home, would we have wanted to enter a world of grief and pain, of evil and death? Yet enter it Jesus did to give us His home to be ours forever. So, He loved us in undeserved grace. And so will we sing in the heavenly Jerusalem a refrain like that of our choirs: Hail, thou ever blessed morn, Hail redemption’s happy dawn, Sing through all Jerusalem: ‘Christ is born in Bethlehem.’ Alleluia.” *Richard Gurgel, President, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

**Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty: December 8** The day after America was attacked in 1941, thousands volunteered to fight for America’s freedom. The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty thanks all veterans who fought to protect our freedoms, especially the freedom to worship. See [www.LCRLFreedom.org](http://www.LCRLFreedom.org) for more information.

**Biblical Stewardship Principles: God’s Stewards are God’s Stewards.** What does this mean? God’s stewards are stewards by virtue of creation and their re-creation in Holy Baptism; therefore, they belong to the Lord. See Gen.1:1, Is. 43:1-31, Romans 6:1-11, 2 Cor.5:14-17, and Eph.2:8-10.

**CALENDAR:**

- Mondays**—6:30pm Women’s Bible Study
- December 12**—Lifeline Screening @ BSLC
- December 14**—Cookie Walk, 9-noon
- December 15**—Foster Care Christmas gifts due
- December 22**—Sunday School Christmas Service
- December 24**—Christmas Eve, 4pm Worship
- December 25**—Christmas Day, 9:30am Worship



**Friday morning Bible Study:** We have wrapped up our study on 1 Peter and will be taking a break until later in January. Watch for more info!

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**Cookie Walk:** Beautiful Savior S.A.L.T. - LWML is holding our annual Cookie Walk on Saturday, December 14th from 9 a.m. to whenever sold out or noon at church. We will be doing our Cookie Walk Pre-Boxed Style again this year.

The specific cookies and candy we are requesting:

- cutouts – frosted
- peanut butter blossoms with Hershey Kiss candy
- Molasses/Gingerbread
- Russian Tea cakes/Mexican Wedding cakes
- No Bake Chow Mein noodle/Ting A Ling cookies
- Spritz cookies
- fudge
- Almond bark



Please drop off your donations of cookies/candy Thursday, December 12th from 8am to Noon or by noon on Friday, December 13th. Also, be sure to stop at the Cookie Walk Pre-Boxed Style on Saturday to purchase items from our selection. Proceeds will be used to fund S.A.L.T. - LWML’s various mission projects throughout the year.

If you have any questions, please contact Louise Skornia at 715-498-0457 or Pam Hinrichs at 715-445-2998.

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**Foster Care Christmas Gifts:** If you are willing and able, please consider taking a tag (or several!) off the tree in the narthex. These are for foster care children in Portage County. Once you find the tag(s) you like, sign up on the sheet next to the corresponding child. We are asking all gifts to be wrapped and returned no later than **Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**, with the gift tag attached. Thank you for helping make Christmas special for these children!

**Women's Epiphany Brunch Event: Saturday, Jan. 11, 10am-12pm** at St. Paul's in Stevens Point. All ladies of Beautiful Savior are warmly invited to this Epiphany brunch and program, "Keeping the Christmas Lights Lit." Bring a friend to learn more about Epiphany and how we can keep our spiritual lights lit through the drear of January and beyond. Childcare will be provided for this free event. Please sign up with Teresa or at <https://forms.gle/VXqFfpRcnMt8kExB8>.



**EPIPHANY**

**Lutheran Heritage Foundation:** Today we welcome Rev. Mark Moss, mission engagement associate at the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, as our guest preacher. Join us during Bible class, when Rev. Moss will tell about LHF's mission work around the globe, and how God is calling people to faith through the Lutheran literature available in their own languages. To support this important mission effort, you may use the special offering envelope attached to the enclosed LHF brochure.

**Thrivent Grants:** Do you have unused **Thrivent Action Teams** that are going to run out at the end of the calendar year? Every person who has Thrivent products is eligible for two Action Teams per year (\$250 each). If you have never taken advantage of this and would like some help, Teresa can help you apply! Ideas: coats for children, fundraiser seed money for the National Youth Gathering, game night or other fellowship activity at church, banners...

**OLD TESTAMENT:** *Genesis 1:1-5*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**EPISTLE**      *Ephesians 5:8-15*

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,

**HOLY GOSPEL:** *John 8:12-21*

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.” Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”

**Beautiful Savior Lutheran Prayer List : 12/8/2024 – 12/14/24**

**Ongoing prayers for Grief & Loss: (Named & Not Named)**

**Loved Ones –**

Family of Elaine Idsvoog; Erin Stroede (mother passed away); family of Art Holford; Heidi Gross (aunt, Hildegard Scheske passed away); Schultz Family; Kubisiak family (Roy's mother passed away); Karen Holman (mother, Rose Janke, passed away); Charlene Kawleski (sister, Kathy, passed away)

**Situations:**

Suicide Attempts, Cancer, Christian Parenting, Caregivers, AODA

**Military:**

Devante; Emily; Nick

**Pending Diagnosis & Treatment:**

Ken Resch (Father of Julie Barge); Paula; Phil Idsvoog; BSLC friend, Sarah, cancer

**Hospitalized/Recovering:**

Pastor Dave Ficken; Sharon Hughes—Hospice

**Circuit 17:**

St Luke-Rapids (starting the Call process for a Pastor); Bethlehem-Nekoosa (starting the Call process for a Pastor)

**Shut-ins:**

Mary S.; Anita C.

**Birthdays:**

12/9 Lynda Helmrick  
12/9 Pam Peters  
12/9 Brady Redd Jr.  
12/10 Karen Holman  
12/12 Jan Dusel

**Baptism Birthdays:**

12/10 Shawn Peters  
12/14 Emily Hansen

**Anniversaries:**

**Missions:**

First Choice Resource Center  
Camp Luther  
Peace Campus Center & Pastor Andy Weden  
St. Paul Lutheran Elementary School  
Immanuel Lutheran Elementary School  
Possible future Lutheran High School  
Wycliffe & Lutheran Bible Translators & Linda Jordan  
J.P. & Aimee Cima & Family  
Orphan Grain Train Center  
Christ Care / Carpenter's Crew

\*\*\*Please let us know if you have any prayer requests – Thank you! \*\*\*

## Old Testament Reading: Malachi 3:1–7b

<sup>1</sup>"Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup>He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

<sup>5</sup>"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

<sup>6</sup>"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. <sup>7</sup>From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them."

## Epistle: Philippians 1:2–11

<sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup>so that you may approve what is excellent,

and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

## Holy Gospel: Luke 3:1–14

<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup>As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

- <sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall become straight,  
and the rough places shall become level ways,  
<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

<sup>7</sup>He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup>Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup>And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" <sup>11</sup>And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." <sup>12</sup>Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" <sup>13</sup>And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." <sup>14</sup>Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."



**About the Cover:** The cries of John in the wilderness for a Baptism of repentance prepared the way of the Lord's first coming. For His second coming, Paul's deep desire is that we will be "pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10). The Lord has accomplished this for us by His abounding love that went all the way to the cross. So, it is by faith today that we are counted as pure and blameless because He is the pure, blameless, and spotless Lamb of God who has taken away our sin (see John 1:29).