

Home Worship Service for

The Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 25, 2026

National Lutheran Schools Week
January 25-31, 2026

Dear Lutheran School Families,

Welcome to National Lutheran Schools Week 2026! This week is a cherished opportunity for us to come together as a community of believers across the nation and around the world to celebrate the joy and purpose found in Lutheran education. Our theme, drawn from Psalm 98:4, is a powerful and vibrant call to action: "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!"

Psalm 98 is a psalm of celebration and praise. It invites us to lift our voices in response to the marvelous things God has done — from creation to salvation — and to His constant care in our daily lives. What a fitting focus for a week in which students, teachers, families and congregations join to reflect on the blessings of Lutheran schools. Each school — no matter the size or setting — is part of a beautiful symphony of joyful noise to the Lord.

This week, our students will explore how to make joyful noise in creation, worship, service, community and in Christ alone. They will see that joyful noise is not simply about loud sound, it is about hearts aligned with God's goodness and mouths eager to proclaim His grace. From hymns in chapels to acts of kindness in the classroom, from shared prayers to service projects, our schools will echo with songs of praise.

Lutheran education is built on Christ and centers on the Gospel. That means every subject taught, every relationship nurtured and every celebration held has eternal significance. And so, with joy in our hearts and praise on our lips, we begin this week confident that Jesus is present in every classroom, guiding our students and staff in truth and love.

Let us truly make a joyful noise — not just this week, but every day. May this celebration renew our gratitude, reignite our mission and remind us of the joy we have in the Lord!

IN CHRIST,

Dr. Alan Freeman

Director, LCMS School Ministry



Shepherd of Tender Youth

Lutheran Service Book 864, Lutheran Worship 471, The Lutheran Hymnal 628



1 Shep - herd of ten - der youth, Guid - ing in
 2 You are the ho - ly Lord, O all - sub -
 3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre -
 4 O ev - er be our guide, Our shep - herd,



love and truth Through de - vious ways; Christ, our tri -
 du - ing Word, Heal - er of strife. Your - self You
 pared the feast Of ho - ly love; And in our
 and our pride, Our staff and song. Je - sus, O



um - phant king, We come Your name to sing
 did a - base That from sin's deep dis - grace
 mor - tal pain None calls on You in vain;
 Christ of God, By Your en - dur - ing Word



And here our chil - dren bring To join Your praise.
 You so might save our race And give us life.
 Our plea do not dis - dain; Help from a - bove.
 Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.

5 So now, and till we die,
 Sound we Your praises high
 And joyful sing:
 Infants and all the throng,
 Who to the Church belong,
 Unite to swell the song
 To Christ, our king!

Public domain

L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

- L** Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.
- C** **Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.** (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)
- L** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?
- C** **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.** (*Psalm 130:3–4*)
- L** Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:
- C** **God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**
(*Luke 18:13*)
- L** Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen.**

Introit **Psalm 22:27–31; antiphon Psalm 22:22**

- L** I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.
- C** **All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.**
- L** For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.
- C** **All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.**
- L** Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
- C** **they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.**
- C** **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**
- L** I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have mercy on us. |

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 9:1–4

¹But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

- ²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
- ³You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- ⁴For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the Lord, all nations!
- C** Extol him, all peoples!
- L** For great is his steadfast love toward us,
- C** and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.
- L** Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
- C** bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Psalm 27:1–9

- L** ¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- C** ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.
- L** ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.
- C** ⁴One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.
- L** ⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

- C** ⁶And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.
- L** ⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!
- C** ⁸You have said, “Seek my face.”
My heart says to you, “Your face, LORD, do I seek.”
- L** ⁹Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help.
- C** Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!

1 Corinthians 1:10–18

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
- C** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Alleluia.

Matthew 4:12–25

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 4th chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

¹²Now when [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.”

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The Apostles' Creed

C 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

O Christ, Our True and Only Light

Lutheran Service Book 839, Lutheran Worship 314, The Lutheran Hymnal 512



1	O	Christ, our	true	and	on -	ly	light,	En -	light -	en
2	Fill	with the	ra -	diance	of	Your	grace	The	souls	now
3	O	gent -	ly	call	those	gone	a -	stray	That	they may
4	Shine	on the	dark -	ened	and	the	cold;	Re -	call	the
5	That	they with	us	may	ev -	er -	more	Such	grace	with



those	who	sit	in	night;	Let	those	a -	far	now
lost	in	er -	ror's	maze;	En -	light -	en	those	whose
find	the	sav -	ing	way!	Let	ev -	'ry	con -	science
wan -	d'rers	to	Your	fold.	U -	nite	all	those	who
won -	d'ring	thanks	a -	dore	And	end -	less	praise	to



hear Your voice And in Your fold with us re - joice.
in - most minds Some dark de - lu - sion haunts and blinds.
sore op - pressed In You find peace and heav'n - ly rest.
walk a - part; Con - firm the weak and doubt - ing heart,
You be giv'n By all Your Church in earth and heav'n.

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Devotional thoughts:

Some people admire Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck. Others appreciate Maya Angelou or Emily Dickinson. Two men stand at the top of my list. I am in awe of Jerry Pournelle and Patrick McManus. These men have now passed away but I was privileged to meet them both. Jerry Pournelle was a brilliant thinker and writer. Patrick McManus was an author of humor of the highest order. I could spend the next hour or two talking about each of them.

Maybe you have met men and women of distinction and fame. What are the characteristics that make a person great? Let me describe someone who might make your list of the world's greatest people

This gentleman is both suave and debonair. He's elegant and charming. He is well-dressed, courteous, and refined.

He's a modern renaissance man who is self-reliant. He is an expert in firearms, martial arts, women, singing, wilderness survival, psychology, and American history! He's "a man of the world" yet practices rigorous morality.

Can you guess who he is? Here is a hint. Although he is extremely sophisticated, he lives in a small town in rural America. Maybe you have already guessed his identity but let me give you one more hint. He is in law enforcement.

You've guessed it. I'm talking about Bernard "Barney" Fife, deputy to Sheriff Andy Taylor of Mayberry, North Carolina.

Are you thinking, "How did you expect me to think of Barney? He's none of those things."

But you are wrong. He has every one of the characteristics that I have listed. He would have recognized himself in a minute.

Of course, those characteristics exist only in his mind. None of the rest of us would think of him that way. Most of the time, he is totally ignorant of his incompetence. This is why he continually displays his inept overconfidence! Psychologists have a name for it. It's called the Dunning-Kruger effect.

In 1999, David Dunning and Justin Kruger published a study titled, "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments." I just call it "Living in Darkness."

You may have met spiritual "Barney Fife"s. Spiritual Barney Fifes are people who don't believe that they need God. They consider themselves to be highly moral and spiritually sophisticated people. It is dangerous to be a spiritual "Barney Fife." It is living in darkness and it leads to eternal separation from God.

Not long after Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist was arrested and thrown into jail in Perea by Herod the Tetrarch. Matthew tells us that when this happened, Jesus went to live in Capernaum in the territory of Zebulun [Nazareth] and Naphtali [Capernaum]. This was a direct fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2).

I wonder if the people of Capernaum thought that they were dwelling in darkness. Compared to Nazareth it was a very prosperous community. Nazareth had a population of only 200-500 at the time of Jesus. But Capernaum was several times larger with a population of about 1,500. It was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee with a thriving commercial fishing industry. Capernaum was on the main road to Damascus. It was the

perfect place for the Romans to place a booth for collecting Taxes. Matthew was at the tax booth in Capernaum when Jesus called him.

No, people were prospering in Capernaum. Life was good. I doubt they thought that they were living in darkness. But the light was about to dawn on them.

Jesus came with this message, "Repent!" The first dawning of light into their lives was their need for repentance. This was the same message that John had preached. It is always the first message needed for those living in darkness. It is a call to recognize reality. Stop being a spiritual Barney Fife.

Why was Jesus so eagerly received by tax collectors and sinners? They were the first to acknowledge their need for repentance.

Following repentance, those dwelling in darkness are ready for the great light of the Gospel! Jesus' message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Talking about the kingdom of heaven may sound strange to our ears. But the people living in Capernaum knew what Jesus meant. When He said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," They understood that Jesus was announcing that the time of the Messiah had come.

What a great blessing it was for the people living in Capernaum to be among the first to welcome the Messiah! The coming of the kingdom of God meant wonderful blessings. Matthew tells us that Jesus "went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Matthew 4:23).

We know that the greatest blessing Jesus brings to us is healing and forgiveness for our sins. Sin causes us to live in the shadow of death (Matthew 4:16). The great light of the Gospel is that Jesus came to forgive sinners!

One day while Jesus was at home in Capernaum preaching the word, there were so many people gathered around Him that there was no more room. Four men brought him a paralytic. They couldn't get to Jesus so they made an opening in the roof and lowered the man down on his bed. The first thing Jesus said to him was, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:1-12).

As humans, we like living in the darkness and ignoring our sins. We find false comfort in being spiritual Barney Fifes. But God sends the light of His word into our lives so that we will recognize our sin and come to Him in repentance.

Then we are ready for the great Light of the Gospel. Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). This is what it means that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

There is no greater joy or gladness than knowing that God has welcomed us into His family through his Son Jesus. John tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

When the Great Light of salvation dawns upon us through faith in Christ, we no longer live in the shadow of death! We are given life eternal.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone lived in this light and life of Christ? Matthew records that Jesus enlisted four fishermen from Capernaum to help Him in this all-important task. He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). And immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:22).

Many people in our country are happy with their prosperity. They are blissfully unaware of their failings and sin. They have fooled themselves into believing that they don't need God. They are spiritual Barney Fifes.

Jesus has ascended into heaven. We no longer are blessed with the presence of the Apostles. But people are still dwelling in darkness under the shadow of death. Who will bring light and life to them?

God has called each of us to this sacred task. He has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20).

Our first responsibility is to do this at home with our families. If God has blessed you with children, they must be baptized and taught the faith.

We do this by supporting pastors, teachers, and missionaries. We do this by supporting the work of Lutheran Schools.

Lutheran schools are one of the few places where the light of Christ shines into the darkness every day! Little lambs for whom the savior died are nurtured in the love and admonition of the Lord. Through the sharing

of the Gospel, they are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ who is our light and our life.

You may be familiar with Jesus' Parable of the Lost Sheep. It's recorded in Matthew 18:10-14. Jesus says that when the shepherd finds the lost "he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray." He goes on to say, "So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these **little ones** should perish." This is how important Jesus views ministry to children.

May we ever be faithful in allowing the Gospel light of Christ to shine in the darkness. May we never hide it under a bushel!

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

Prayers

L Lord of all nations, Your Son became flesh to enlighten a world darkened by sin with His grace. Visit us with His gifts of forgiveness and life, that our way may be glorious with His salvation.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, mercifully bless the Christian education of our children so that they may grow in faith to the praise of Your holy name. Bless Lutheran schools wherever they may be and all other places where our children are brought closer to You. Encourage our congregations to support those who teach and those who learn. Give joy to all teachers, and give them the privilege of seeing the fruits of their labors; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, Your Son gathered the little children to Himself that He might bless them. Strengthen parents so that they may faithfully bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord by a life of prayer and devotion to You and Your Word. Bless the work of Sunday School teachers and all who assist parents in teaching the faith to children, that all might be led into the Savior's loving arms and grow to lead godly lives to the praise and honor of Christ's holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Almighty Lord, Your Son's cross and crucifixion is folly to the world, but it is the source of repentance and forgiveness for all His elect. Preserve the preaching of the cross in our midst, that from this life-giving tree, we would continue to receive Your faith-preserving gifts.

C Amen.

L Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that the new found peace in Gaza would be sustained.

C Amen.

L Gracious Lord, be present with the lonely. Work through us, that they may find welcome and consolation within the fellowship of God's people. Grant that those who sorrow may not despair but find hope in Christ.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C 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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

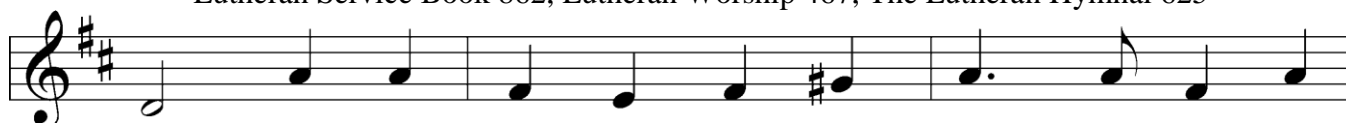
C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Oh, Blest the House

Lutheran Service Book 862, Lutheran Worship 467, The Lutheran Hymnal 625



1 Oh, blest the house, what - e'er be - fall, Where Je - sus
2 Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in
3 Oh, blest the par - ents who give heed Un - to their
4 Oh, blest that house; it pros - pers well. In peace and
5 Then here will I and mine to - day A sol - emn



Christ is all in all! A home that is not whol - ly
hope and love a - bound; They trust their God and serve Him
chil - dren's fore - most need And wea - ry not of care or
joy the par - ents dwell, And in their chil - dren's lives is
prom - ise make and say: Though all the world for - sake His



His— How sad and poor and dark it is!
still And do in all His ho - ly will!
cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!
shown How rich - ly God can bless His own.
Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!

Let's Make a Joyful Noise PSALM 98:4



LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES

- › Experiencing and celebrating God's lavish gifts of love, grace and mercy
- › Sharing those gifts with others
- › Being transformed by God's Word
- › Clinging to the cross of Jesus

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- › Excelling at reading, writing and effective communication
- › Training minds for success at the next academic level
- › Creating a strong work ethic, critical thinking skills and the ability to relate well with others

SCHOOLS > 1,854
TEACHERS > 21,312
DISTRICTS > 35

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MESSAGE OF
JESUS' LOVE WITH
MORE THAN

180,000

STUDENTS, THEIR
FAMILIES AND THE
COMMUNITY

 THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD
School Ministry

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of The Third Sunday after Epiphany January 26 — 31, 2026

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
- C** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 22:27–31; antiphon Psalm 22:22

- L** I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.
- C** All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.
- L** For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.
- C** All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.
- L** Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
- C** they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.
- C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- L** I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have mercy on us. |

Psalm 22 is often called the Good Friday Psalm. In anguish, Jesus cried out the first verse of this psalm from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is frequently read in its entirety on Good Friday or Maundy Thursday during the Stripping of the Altar.

The first 21 verses are descriptive of Jesus’ crucifixion. It contains many prophecies that were fulfilled while Jesus was on the cross.

But at verse 22 (the antiphon for our introit), the psalm takes a distinctive turn. It changes from a portrait of pain and agony on the cross to a song of praise for the deliverance that God brings to all people.

We know that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! As a result, our introit proclaims, “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you” (Psalm 22:27).

L Let us pray. O Lord God, thank You for the salvation You have provided for all the nations of the earth through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Grant us the faith and wisdom to join with all believers everywhere in praising Your holy Name. Move us to pass on the message of sin and grace to the next generation through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Tuesday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
C “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Alleluia.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

L Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

I went down another rabbit hole preparing this mediation. In this collect, we pray for God to “mercifully look upon our infirmities.” I began to wonder if infirmities might be one of those newly forbidden words. By this, I mean words that we have used for decades with no ill intent that have suddenly been deemed offensive. It seems that we are still permitted for the time being to use the word infirmity.

Christians have always been concerned about giving offense. I was warned against giving offense as a pastor. I learned from my mentors that I should carefully guard my words and actions lest I give offense. This was a generally understood standard of conduct for everyone, not just pastors.

Unfortunately, rude and offensive language has become the new norm. Celebrities and pop culture wannabes often pride themselves in making vulgar language a part of their everyday speech. Thinly veiled substitutes are now acceptable for television advertising. As a result, it has become almost impossible to avoid them in our day. It's not uncommon to hear Christian people use language that is painful to my ears.

On the other hand, I also learned from my mentors that there is a difference between giving offense and taking offense. We must always be careful to never give offense but we also must be careful not to take offense when no offense was intended.

Giving offense is evidence of our fallen nature. It is something that we must avoid. Likewise, taking offense is also proof of our sinful condition. We should never give or take offense!

Sin is our greatest infirmity. It tops all others. Giving and taking offense is just the tip of the iceberg. Our constant conflict with one another is caused by sin. Sin affects our closest relationships. It separates us from God and man.

God's merciful answer to the infirmity of our sin is His only-begotten Son. He took all of our offenses upon Himself as He went to the cross.

As we live under God's grace and mercy, we no longer want to give or take offense. We understand God's forgiveness when we offend Him. We are ready to forgive those who offend us. May he heal and defend us from all sinful offenses.

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

L Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.

C "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Alleluia.

Psalms 27:1–9

L ¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

C ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.

L ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

C ⁴One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

L ⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

C ⁶And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

L ⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!

C ⁸You have said, "Seek my face."

My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."

- L** ⁹Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help.
C **Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!**

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Christ, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**

I may have mentioned this before but Psalm 27 is one of my favorite psalms. I have read it many times at a bedside of people in the hospital.

It begins with these words, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Notice how David connects light and salvation. This gives us insight into what Isaiah meant when he prophesied, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2). This prophecy was fulfilled when salvation came to Capernaum in the person of Jesus who is the savior.

Psalm 27:1 adds another dimension. David asks: Since the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? Then he asks: Since the Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Light and salvation drive away fear!

We live in a dangerous and scary world. Every trip to the hospital can cause anxiety. But David reminds us that while we may choose to be afraid, we really don’t have to be. Our ultimate salvation is already assured in our savior Jesus.

But we don’t have to wait for our ultimate victory in heaven. God protects us all along the way. In verse 2, David makes this stunning statement, “When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall!”

The sheep of the Lord’s flock seem to be easy prey. But God has a surprise for the evildoers! They take aim at God’s people but by Divine providence and mercy, His people triumph while the evil and wicked fall!

God protects us every step of life’s journey until we are safely home in the mansions of heaven.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, thank You for being our Light and Salvation. Grant us freedom from anxiety and fear as we walk down life’s path through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
C **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Alleluia.**

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Christ, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**
L O Lord, **C** **Have Mercy on us.**

Isaiah 9:1–4

¹But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.

³You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

The first thing that stands out to me in Isaiah's prophecy is the Great Light that shines in the deep darkness. But there is a second theme in these verses that deserves our attention.

Isaiah tells us that the coming of the Great Light brings joy and gladness. When the Messiah comes, there is no gloom.

No one can be happy all the time. It is unrealistic to think that Christians should always display joy and gladness. Some have the false notion that Christians should not cry at funerals forgetting that Jesus himself wept at Lazarus' grave.

On the other hand, there is no particular virtue in gloominess. There is time for somberness. Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Holy Week are times when solemn reflection on sin and repentance is the right thing to do. But the overarching mood of the Christian faith is joy.

The angel brought good news of great joy to the shepherds when Jesus was born. When the angel announced the coming birth of John the Baptist, he told Zechariah, "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." When baby John the Baptist in the womb heard the voice of Mary greeting Elizabeth, he leaped for joy. When the Wise Men saw the star come to rest over the place where the child was, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. When the women went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning, the angel told them, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said." Then they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

May Jesus' love and forgiveness bring us joy and gladness until we enter paradise where our joy will have no end.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for the gift of joy and gladness. Strengthen our faith, increase our love and hope that the gloominess of sin would be banished from our lives until we join the Church Triumphant through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
C “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.

1 Corinthians 1:10–18

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

What do we know of Chloe and her people? Unfortunately, this is the only place where she is mentioned in the Bible. Paul was in Ephesus when he heard from Chloe’s people. It would be reasonable to assume that she had some commercial interests that required her to have “people” who traveled between Corinth and Ephesus.

She also loves her church. She has a concern about what is happening in her congregation. So she had her people contact Paul to apprise him of the situation.

Chloe rightly judged the seriousness of the divisions that were occurring in the church. Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians dealt with many problems from abuses surrounding the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11) to some denying the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15) and everything in between. But divisions in the church are important enough for him to tackle that problem first.

We could learn a lesson from Chloe and Paul. Unity in the church is of prime importance. Divisions in the Church damage the proclamation of Christ crucified which is the power of God for salvation.

May we do everything in our power to heal any divisions that may have occurred in our congregations.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the faith of Christians like Chloe and her people who love the Church. Move us to not only cling to the truth of Your word but also to learn that we are all one in Christ under His cross. Amen.

Saturday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the LORD, all nations!
C Extol him, all peoples!

L For great is his steadfast love toward us,
C and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
L Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Matthew 4:17

L Alleluia, Alleluia, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,.
C “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

1 Corinthians 1:17–18

¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

“A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....” Well, maybe not that long ago or far away, but it seems that way to me. I was beginning my studies to become a pastor. Four years of college and four years of seminary lay ahead of me. On one of my first visits home from college, my grandmother was at our house. I was excited to tell her that I was studying Greek. In her wisdom, she looked at me and asked, “Why are you studying Greek, the Bible has already been translated into English?”

I wasn’t prepared for that question. I don’t remember how I answered her. I’m not sure that I’m better able to answer that question today.

That happened in the fall of 1969. We had the King James Bible and the Revised Standard Version. What more did we need? At last count, I now have 62 English translations available to me!

Nevertheless, I made an interesting discovery about 1 Corinthians 1:17 that isn’t apparent in these English translations. Almost all the translations say something similar to the ESV, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel.” (I know. I read them.) But if you were reading these words in Greek, it might come out more like this, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to gospelize.” (“To preach the gospel” is only one word in Greek.)

I’m sure that this isn’t a big deal but to my ears, there is a subtle difference between “to preach the gospel” and “to gospelize.” In my mind, preaching is an activity that takes place at a certain time and place usually in a church service. While to gospelize implies that this is something that is happening all the time. Do with that what you will.

Sharing the Gospel is an important component of our Christian lives. It is not confined to the public preaching that happens on Sunday in a pulpit by pastors.

Whether you are young or old, telling the story of Christ crucified is the power of God that saves sinners. May we always be ready “to gospelize” when God presents us with people who need to hear about the love of God in Christ Jesus and the gift of eternal life.

Prayer: O God, thank You for the message of salvation through faith in Jesus. Grant us opportunities to tell others about the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation won for us on the cross by our Savior, Jesus. Amen.

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