

## ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH and ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Our Mission: Learn God's Truth, Share Spirit's Healing, Follow Jesus' Ways.**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Conversion of Paul

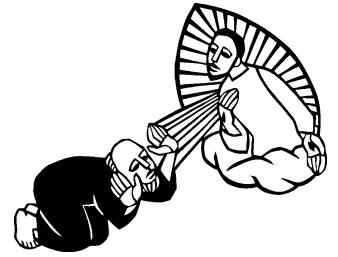
January 25, 2026, Virtual Prayer and Preaching

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### The CHURCH'S GATHERING

#### **CONFESSiON and FORGIVENESS**

We bless the holy Trinity,  $\ddagger$  one God,  
the Creator of heaven and earth,  
the Word who spoke life into being,  
the Wind stirring the waters. **Amen**



We turn in confession to the one who knows us completely.

*Silence is kept for reflection.* Mighty God, lover of justice,

**you call us to life in community, but we have served our own interests at the expense of our neighbors. We have sown deceit where honesty was needed. We say the right words, but our hearts are far from you. Turn us to seek your face. Knit us together and give us the mind of Christ, that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen**

The former things have passed away, and new things God now declares: Like a spring of water that never fails, God covers you in the righteousness of Christ, and forgives your sin in  $\ddagger$  Jesus' name. May their Spirit give you strength to live for others, and bless you with the gift of peace. **Amen**

#### **GREETING and PRAYER of the DAY**

The gracious love of God, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ,

and their Spirit's overflowing joy, is with you all. **And also with you.**

Holy One, **hear our prayer.** *A brief silence.* O God, by the preaching of your apostle Paul you have caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world. Grant that we may follow his example and be witnesses to the truth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

### GOD'S WORD

#### **FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:1-4**

*The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.*

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time the LORD brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

This is God's Word and our life.

### **SECOND READING: Matthew 4:12-23**

*Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God's reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples*

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea,  
across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—  
the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region  
and shadow of death, light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the realm of heaven has come near."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and Jesus called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

This is God's Word and our life.

## **HOLY GOSPEL: Acts 9:1-18**

*Contemporary English Version*

This is the Holy Gospel according to the Acts of the Apostles, the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter.

Saul kept on threatening to kill the Lord's followers. He even went to the high priest and asked for letters to the leaders of the Jewish meeting places in Damascus. He did this because he wanted to arrest and take to Jerusalem any man or woman who had accepted the Lord's Way. When Saul had almost reached Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul! Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?"

"Who are you?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus," the Lord answered. "I am the one you are so cruel to. Now get up and go into the city, where you will be told what to do."

The men with Saul stood there speechless. They had heard the voice, but they had not seen anyone. Saul got up from the ground, and when he opened his eyes, he could not see a thing. Someone then led him by the hand to Damascus, and for three days he was blind and did not eat or drink.

A follower named Ananias lived in Damascus, and the Lord spoke to him in a vision. Ananias answered, "Lord, here I am."

The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the house of Judas on Straight Street. When you get there, you will find a man named Saul from the city of Tarsus. Saul is praying, and he has seen a vision. He saw a man named Ananias coming to him and putting his hands on him, so he could see again."

Ananias replied, "Lord, a lot of people have told me about the terrible things this man has done to your followers in Jerusalem. Now the chief priests have given him the power to come here and arrest anyone who worships in your name."

The Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I have chosen him to tell foreigners, kings, and the people of Israel about me. I will show him how much he must suffer for worshiping in my name."

Ananias left and went into the house where Saul was staying. Ananias placed his hands on him and said, "Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me. He is the same one who appeared to you along the road. He wants you to be able to see and to be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Suddenly something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see. He got up and was baptized.

This is the Good News of Christ's Victory.

## **HYMN of the DAY: "Jesus Call Us; o'er the Tumult"**

- 1 Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea,  
day by day his clear voice sounding, saying, "Christian, follow me":
- 2 As of old Saint Andrew heard it by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for Jesus' sake.

- 3 Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store, from each idol that would keep us, saying, "Christian, love me more."
- 4 In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease, still he calls, in cares and pleasures, "Christian, love me more than these."
- 5 Jesus calls us! By your mercy, Savior, may we hear your call, give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all.

**MESSAGE:**      ***The Light***      *silence for reflection follows*

**The CHURCH PRAYS**

**PRAYERS of the PEOPLE**

As God's beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

*A brief silence.*

Holy One, you entrust the message of the cross and the mission of the gospel to the church in every land. Guide the newly baptized and deepen the faith of all who follow Christ. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Holy Creator, you lavish creation with splendor, and we praise you for the gift of life. Teach us to live as wise stewards, sharing the earth's resources with all inhabitants of this garden planet. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Holy Judge, your power is love, and you judge the nations by the measure of Christ. Free any who are unjustly accused or wrongly condemned. We pray for those in authority. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Holy Giver, you gather, forgive, and shape us as disciples of Christ. Nurture in us a spirit of patience and respect, that we may love one another as you love us. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Holy Lover, you care for vulnerable young children, frail elders, and any who are sick. We pray for all who are affected by natural disasters. Provide for their needs and relieve their suffering. We pray for John, Greg, Lori, Mary Lue, Lynn, Will, Bea, our at-home worshippers, ... Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Holy Savior, you free us from the power of death. Lead and guide us until we come at last into the communion of all your saints in light. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

We pray that God's rule will appear, as Jesus has taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us**

**our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen**

### **SPIRIT'S SENDING**

#### **PRAYER for MISSION**

Holy God, hear our prayer. *A brief silence.* Radiant God, we have seen your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. You have drawn us to your heart. Send us with delight, that our lives may reflect the beauty of your love, and bear witness to all we have seen and heard, through Jesus Christ, our Leader and Savior. **Amen**

#### **BLESSING and PEACE**

May the triune God, who has put a new song in your mouth and tuned your heart for praise, bless + you now and forever. **Amen**

"Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light.

**And it shines upon everyone who lives  
in the land of darkest shadows."**

The peace of Christ is always with you. **And also with you.**

### **Confession of Peter**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is framed by two commemorations, the Confession of Peter (a relatively recent addition to the calendar) and the older Conversion of Paul. Both apostles are remembered together on June 29, but these two days give us an opportunity to focus on key events in each of their lives. Today we remember that Peter was led by God's grace to acknowledge Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This confession is the common confession that unites us with Peter and with all Christians of every time and place.

### **Conversion of Paul**

Today the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes to an end. The church remembers how a man of Tarsus named Saul, a former persecutor of the early Christian church, was turned around by God's grace to become one of its chief preachers. The risen Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and called him to proclaim the gospel. The narratives describing Paul's conversion in the Acts of the Apostles, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians inspire this commemoration, which was first celebrated among the Christians of Gaul.

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### ***Today's Sponsorships***

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*Today's Worship Folders are Given to the Glory of God*

In Loving Memory of the January birthdays of  
Genevieve Sacker (15), Phillip Sacker (27),  
and Catherine Haug (24).

Given by Mr. & Mrs. James Lynch, and family.

### ***Learning, Serving, and Fellowship Opportunities***

#### **Special Congregational Meeting Notice re: Stairlift to the Fellowship Hall:**

**Hall:** A special congregational meeting has been called for Sunday, February 1, 2026 to be held between the worship services. The purpose of this brief meeting is to approve a proposal for the installation of a stairlift from the school lobby to the Fellowship Hall. No other church business will be discussed or conducted at the special meeting.

-Mark McQuade, Council President

**Prayer Boxes:** While the prayer group will not continue to meet (at this time), we will continue to collect prayers for Sunday worship, and to pray for our school families and staff. If you would like to submit a prayer request, please use the prayer jar in the school lobby or the basket in the church lobby.

#### **2026 Offering Envelopes are available in the Narthex.**

#### **Baltimore Luth. School/Concordia Prep School Alumni Assn. Bull and**

**Oyster Roast:** Saturday, January 31st from 7-11 pm. at Rosedale Gardens (8037 Philadelphia Rd., 21237). Food, DJ, door prizes, raffles, 50/50, and more! Proceeds benefit the Concordia Prep Alumni Scholarship Fund. Please bring a non-perishable food item for Lutheran Mission Society. Beginning 1/21, tickets are \$65/person or \$600/table of 10. If you would like to reserve a table, you must purchase a full table in advance, noting the names of the people who will be sitting at the table. Individual tickets will be \$70 at the door (cash or check only) while space is available. To purchase tickets, visit the alumni page at [concordiapreschool.org](http://concordiapreschool.org).

**Bull & Oyster Roast:** Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-10:30 pm. at Columbus Gardens (4301 Klosterman Ave., 21236). This event is being hosted by St. John's, Parkville, and proceeds benefit their church building fund. Food, DJ, dancing, raffles, and silent auction. Tickets are \$55/adult and \$50 for children ages 20 and under). Ticket purchases are requested no later than January 29<sup>th</sup>. Contact tony (443-474-2727) or the church office (410-65-1234).

**Day of Renewal:** Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> from 9 am.-2 pm. at the Church of the Nativity & Holy Comforter (419 Cedarcroft Rd., 21212). The Synodical Women's Organization invites all women of the ELCA to this event featuring as the speaker, Dr. Jennifer Houston McNeel, Registration is \$8/person and due by January 31<sup>st</sup>. Contact Sallie Gartside at [sallieabn@aol.com](mailto:sallieabn@aol.com) or 410-218-2614. (Registration form available from the church office).

**Valentine's Day Dance:** Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> from 7-11 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). Admission is \$20/person and includes: soda, wine, chips, pretzels, and live music! Guests are invited to bring their own beer, bottle and food. Contact Elaine Wagenfuehr at [melainepenn@gmail.com](mailto:melainepenn@gmail.com) or 443-854-1490, or Denise Loverde at [trueblueforever2006@yahoo.com](mailto:trueblueforever2006@yahoo.com) or 410-207-6389.

**Shrove Tuesday Dinner:** Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. St. Luke (7001 Harford Rd., 21234) invites you to a pancake supper and pretzel making! Admission is free. Call the church office for details (410-444-5171).

**Sponsorships Available:** Altar flowers on 2/1 & 15, and bulletins on 2/1 (contact the church office).

**St. Peter's Family Goods Center:** If you are interested in volunteering for the Family Goods Center, please contact Bill Lauer. This is a great opportunity for service hours for your middle or high school student, and volunteer hours for SPES families. Please place donations in the shopping cart in the Narthex.

**On-line Giving:** As an alternate way of submitting your offering, you can make donations on-line through PayPal! Login to your PayPal account and search for our tag: @Spl367 or St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Christian Day School.

### ***News from St. Peter's Elementary School and PACE***

Open enrollment for the 2026-27 school year has begun! Contact the office at 410-665-4521 if you have questions or want to schedule a tour. Referrals are always welcome!

**Texas Roadhouse Fundraiser:** Dine-in or carry out, Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup> from 3-10 pm. at the White Marsh location (8207 Town Center Dr., 21236). St. Peter's ES earns 10% of all food purchases (when flier is presented). Fliers are in the church office lobby, the Narthex, or by contacting the school.

**Upcoming Open Houses:** Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> from 5-6 pm., Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-2:30 pm., and Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> from 12:30-1:30 pm. Contact the school office for more information.