

**ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH and ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
***Our Mission: Learn God's Truth, Share Spirit's Healing, Follow Jesus' Ways.***  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

February 1, 2026, Virtual Prayer and Preaching

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**The CHURCH'S GATHERING**

**CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS**

We bless the holy Trinity, ☩ 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 ☩ 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.* Holy God, you confound the  
world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart.  
Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for  
peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son,  
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

**GOD'S WORD**

**READING: Micah 6:1-4, 6-8**

*With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings  
a lawsuit against Israel. God has "wearied" Israel with a long history of  
saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn  
divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty  
to God, and to walk shrewdly in God's service.*

This is a reading from the prophet Micah, chapter 6.  
Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and God will contend with Israel.

"O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

*The people respond:*

"With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

God has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

This is God's Word and our life.

**HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12** *Contemporary English Version*

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.*

This is the Holy Gospel as the Word was given to Matthew, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

We give glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down. Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he taught them:

God favors those people who depend only on him.

They belong to the realm of heaven!

God favors those people who grieve.

They will find comfort!

God favors those people who are humble.

The earth will belong to them!

God favors those people who want  
to obey him more than to eat or drink.

They will be given what they want!

God favors those people who are merciful.

They will be treated with mercy!

God favors those people whose hearts are pure.

They will see God!

God favors those people who make peace.

They will be called God's children!

God favors those people who are treated badly for doing right.

They belong to the realm of heaven.

God will favor you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven. People did these same things to the prophets who lived long ago.

This is the Good News of Christ's Victory.

**HYMN of the DAY: # 873 "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!"**

- 1 Rejoice, ye pure in heart!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing;  
your festal banner wave on high,  
the cross of Christ your king.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
- 2 With voice as full and strong  
as ocean's surging praise,  
send forth the sturdy hymns of old,  
the psalms of ancient days.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
- 3 With all the angel choirs,  
with all the saints on earth  
pour out the strains of joy and bliss,  
true rapture, noblest mirth.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
- 4 Still lift your standard high,  
still march in firm array,  
as pilgrims through the darkness wend  
till dawns the golden day.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

- 5     At last the march shall end;  
the wearied ones shall rest;  
the pilgrims find their home at last,  
Jerusalem the blest.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
- 6     Praise God who reigns on high,  
the Lord whom we adore:  
the Father, Son, and Spirit blest,  
one God forevermore.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

Text: Edward H. Plumptre, 1821-1891, alt.

**MESSAGE:**            **God's Favor**                    *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.*

God our wisdom, renew the church in the power of the Spirit, that it may do justice, love kindness, live humbly, and boldly proclaim Christ crucified. We pray for social justice and humanitarian aid ministries. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God our source, we honor you by caring wisely for your creation. We pray for the health of old growth forests, ice caps, and ocean currents. Preserve the diversity of life on earth. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God our righteousness, raise up visionary leaders who serve with integrity and respect human rights. Increase freedom in every nation. Protect educators, journalists, artists, and religious activists who are reviled for speaking truth. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God our blessing, we pray for the children and youth of this congregation, and for parents, grandparents, mentors, teachers, and youth ministers who model love for their neighbor and care for others. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God our advocate, you give hope to all who suffer because of persecution, poverty, or war. Reunite separated families and bring orphaned children to

safety. Comfort any who grieve or suffer in any way. 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.*

God our joy, we give thanks for the lives of those before us who journeyed humbly with you. 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.**

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***Today's Sponsorships***

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*Today's Altar Flowers are Given to the Glory of God*

In Honor of Ashley Heinbaugh's and  
Alexander Smith's January birthdays.  
Given by the Heinbaugh family.

In Celebration of Michael and Lucas Barnes' birthdays.  
Given by Nancy Barnes.

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

In Honor of Jennie on her February 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.  
Given with love by Mom and Dad.

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

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

**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

**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).

**Ash Wednesday Worship:** Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. in the church.

**St. Peter's Annual Meeting:** The church council voted to postpone the Annual Meeting, scheduled for February 22<sup>nd</sup>, to Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> between services. The meeting was postponed because of the possibility of a bad weather winter, and not all financial information and audits will be available in time for a 2/22 meeting.

**Sponsorships Available:** Altar flowers on 2/15 (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!

**World's Finest Chocolate** fundraiser begins on Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>! Purchase a bar, or two, from an SPES student or at the school office!

**Upcoming Open Houses:** 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.