



January 4, 2026 – Epiphany (Observed)

AS WE GATHER

Today we celebrate Epiphany. That is, we remember the wise men (or Magi) who came from the east searching for “the king of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2). They saw a star and followed it to search out this king and worship him. When they found him, they “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10). What a wonderful reaction to seeing the Christ! And they proceeded to give Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Today, gifts are still given. On the one hand, we bring to God our very selves as “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1). But on the other, the greatest gift given today is not given by us to God. Rather, it is given by God to *you*! Through the preaching of His Word and the receiving of Christ’s Body and Blood, He gives you His gifts to strengthen and keep you in the one true faith! Praise be to God!

WELCOME

HYMN *LSB 399, “The Star Proclaims the King Is Here”*

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCES Based on *John 1:4–5, 9; 8:12*

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,

People: **the light no darkness can overcome.**

Pastor: In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.

People: **The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it. The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Pastor: Let us take a moment of silence for reflection on God’s Word and for self-examination.

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

People: **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. 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: 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 Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

KYRIE

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

People: **Amen.**

HYMN OF PRAISE *"This is the Feast" (Music and words in hymnal, LSB 155)*

All: *Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

Worthy is Christ the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. *Refrain*

Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are His. *Refrain*

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation; Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. *Refrain*

For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. Alleluia. *Final Refrain*

SALUTATION AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray. O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 60:1–6*

¹ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the

wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE READING *Ephesians 3:1–12*

¹ For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

VERSE

All: Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

GOSPEL READING *Matthew 2:1–12*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the second chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ " 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON Mathew 2:1-12 "The Importance of Worship for People Who Have so Much"

NICENE CREED

All: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER

Pastor: Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: We trust, O Lord, in Your great mercy to hear and answer us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *LSB 785, "We Praise You, O God"*

THE COMMUNION CONFESSION

Pastor: The Lord's Supper is God's gift for Christians who are properly taught. In communion, we want people to receive Christ's body and blood for their good. This means that as you come to the Lord's Table you affirm with each communicant that Jesus is your Savior and Lord; and with Lutheran Christians you confess:

People: **I recognize and confess that I am a sinner. I repent of my sins and ask God's forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ is my only Lord and Savior from sin, Satan, and death. I believe that the risen Christ is truly present in the Sacrament and, that under the form of bread and wine, I receive His true body and blood for the forgiveness of my sin and the strengthening of my faith and life. (Augsburg Confession-Article X)**

PREFACE

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.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *(Music and words in hymnal, LSB 161)*

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of pow'r and might: Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Blessed are You, Lord of heaven and earth, for You have had mercy on those whom You created and sent Your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. With repentant joy we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and His blood on the cross. Gathered in the name and the remembrance of Jesus, we beg You, O Lord, to forgive, renew, and strengthen us with Your Word and Spirit. Grant us faithfully to eat His body and drink His blood as He bids us do in His own testament. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers; deliver and preserve us. To You alone, O Father, be all glory, honor, and worship, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

People: 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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

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."

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

People: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD *(Music and words in hymnal, LSB 163)*

All: Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.

DISTRUBUTION HYMNS

LSB 623, "Lord Jesus Christ, We Humbly Pray"

LSB 849, "Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

LSB 566, "By Grace I'm Saved"

THANK THE LORD *(Music and words in hymnal, LSB 164)*

All: Thank the Lord and sing His praise; tell ev'ryone what He has done. Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and proudly bear His name. He recalls His promises and leads His people forth in joy with shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia, alleluia.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BLESSING

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

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 *LSB 924, "Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing"*

CLOSING

Pastor: Go in peace and serve your neighbor.

People: Thanks be to God!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS for Week of January 4, 2026

Grace Lutheran Church 1120 S. Park Ave. Aurora, MO

Church: 417-678-3603 Pastor Daniel Heitshusen

Cell: 832-727-3135 daniel.heitshusen@gmail.com Pastor's Day Off; Friday

Family for the Week: James Sharp & Dane Arbuckle Families
Zion, Prairie City, Mo.

Prayers of Peace and Comfort:

Transportation Help Needed: We have a member of the church needing transportation to some doctor appointments. There is an announcement on the bulletin board as to times and locations needed. Please let Pastor Daniel know if you can help. Thanks to all who can help.

Sheltering Hope is an organization here in Aurora. They recently voted to form the following committees in 2026 to meet their goals: Jobs committee, Mentorship committee, and Transportation committee. If you are interested in learning more about Sheltering Hope and/or serving on one of the committees, please see Pastor Heitshusen for more details.

To the Grace Congregation: Many thanks for the generous gift. Thanks to Sue for her time & work and all the faithful & talented choir members. Thanks also to Pastor Daniel for his help and being easy to work with. May God continue to bless our congregation in 2026. Vonnie Suelter