

COME GROW SERVE

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

Welcome to St. Paul's Lutheran Church!

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

*Words printed in **bold** are spoken by all. Visitors are invited to sign the guest registry in the Narthex or fill out a pew card and place it in the offering plate.*

THIS SERVICE IS LIVE STREAMED. TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

GATHERING

WELCOME

PM: Welcome to those who are joining us online. Welcome to worship at St. Paul's!

PRELUDE

Lord, Do With Me According to Thy Goodness

Johann Walther

The assembly is invited to stand.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

P: Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Holy God, fountain of living water, source of mercy, tender and mighty, you are clothed with majesty and splendor. Your steadfast love fills the earth.

All: Your steadfast love fills the earth.

P: Your love flows through water, satisfying the thirst of all living things, sustaining life in this community, nourishing and delighting us. We bless you for these gifts of water: Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, and the Skokie Lagoon. Your steadfast love fills the earth.

All: Your steadfast love fills the earth.

P: Your love flows through water, a sign of your saving power: Noah and the animals survive the flood, Hagar discovers your well. The Israelites escape through the sea, and they drink from your gushing rock. Naaman washes his leprosy away, and the Samaritan woman will never be thirsty again. Your steadfast love fills the earth.

All: Your steadfast love fills the earth.

P: Your love flows through the water of baptism joined to your life-giving Word: your well of mercy and cleansing flood, your sea of deliverance from death into life, your healing river washing sin away, your living water springing up to eternal life. Your steadfast love fills the earth.

All: Your steadfast love fills the earth.

P: Shower us with your Holy Spirit. Fill us with your love. Clothe us and all your people with grace. Embolden us to do justice. Bless us to love mercy. Guide us to walk humbly with you, whom we thank and praise, through Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

All: Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

Christ, Whose Glory Fills The Skies

ELW 553

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A: Let us pray.
Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

All: Amen.

The assembly is invited to be seated.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:1-9a

A reading from Isaiah.

¹ Shout out; do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

³ “Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers.

⁴ You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

^{9a} Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

Word of God. Word of Life.

All: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 112:1-10



¹ Hallelujah! Happy are they who | fear the Lord
and have great delight in | God's commandments!

² **Their descendants will be mighty | in the land;
the generation of the upright | will be blessed.**

³ Wealth and riches will be | in their house,
and their righteousness will | last forever.

⁴ **Light shines in the darkness | for the upright;
the righteous are merciful and full | of compassion. R**

⁵ It is good for them to be gener- | ous in lending
and to manage their af- | fairs with justice.

⁶ **For they will nev- | er be shaken;
the righteous will be kept in everlast- | ing remembrance.**

⁷ They will not be afraid of any | evil rumors;
their heart is steadfast, trusting | in the Lord.

⁸ **Their heart is established and | will not shrink,**

until they see their desire up- | on their enemies.

⁹They have given freely to the poor, and their righteousness stands | fast forever;
they will hold up their | head with honor.

¹⁰**The wicked will see it and be angry; they will gnash their teeth and | pine away;
the desires of the wick- | ed will perish. R**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹ When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶ Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory ⁸ and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

Word of God. Word of Life.

All: Thanks be to God.

The assembly is invited to stand for the reading of the Gospel.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Please be seated.

SERMON

Pr. Peg Otte

Please stand as you are able.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Christ Be Our Light

ELW 715, v. 1, 2, 4

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

PM: 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.

PM: Your church does ministry in many and various ways. Keep the baptized true to the mind of Christ, that our works and witness bring hope to a troubled world. Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

A: Your marvelous creation cries out to you. Restore polluted air, soil, and water sources to wholeness. Guard honeybees, elephants, great whales and songbirds from harm, and renew the face of the earth. Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

PM: Your people in every nation suffer injustice, poverty, and the threat of violence. Guide those in authority to govern with compassion, and bring peace to war zones. We pray for our enemies. Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

A: Your blessings are poured out for all in need. Help and heal any who experience trauma, discrimination, disease, hunger, abuse, or persecution. Comfort those who are sick or grieving, especially those on our prayer list and those we pray for either silently or aloud (*pause*). Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

PM: Your wisdom guides this congregation and its ministries. Sustain our ordained leaders, staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. Inspire and guide our annual meeting decisions that we may be bearers of your active, persistent hope. Form us to be salt and light for the neighbors we serve, following the example of Christ. Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

A: Your saints rejoice at your heavenly banquet. We give thanks for our beloved sister in faith, Barbara Gazzolo, whose life was a witness to your abiding presence, wisdom and grace. As she is held in your promise of everlasting life, deepen our trust that we also will be embraced by your eternal love. Merciful God,

All: receive our prayer.

PM: 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.

All: Amen.

PEACE

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

All: And also with you.

The assembly is invited to be seated.

MEAL

THE OFFERING

An offering is gathered and the Table is set.

MUSICAL OFFERING

God Be In My Head

John Rutter

Liana German, soprano; Nicholas Marotta, mezzo-soprano

OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray.

God of majesty, no eye has seen, no ear has heard what you have prepared for those who love you, yet in this meal you reveal the wideness of your mercy. Use what we have gathered to feed us with the reign of God come near, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

All: Amen

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

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

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations; in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son; and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy Great Thanksgiving

The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below each staff. The lyrics are: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly are you, God of pow - er and might; heav - en and earth are filled with your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is the one who comes in your name. Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.'

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly are you, God of pow - er and

might; heav - en and earth are filled with your

glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed is the one who comes in your name. Ho -

san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P: God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, you have brought us this far along the way.

In times of bitterness you did not abandon us, but guided us into the path of love and light. In every age you sent prophets to make known your loving will for all humanity. The cry of the poor has become your own cry; our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire. In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant to preach good news to the afflicted, to break bread with the outcast and despised, and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P: Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we await the day when Jesus shall return to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death. Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen.

All: Amen.

P: Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate, to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world. Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen.

All: Amen.

P: Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age, that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection, we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Together as one body, we pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

All: 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, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNE

P: Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Come to the table; taste and see.



DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We will commune one side of the church at a time. Please come forward to receive the bread first. Gluten free wafers are available.

You may choose a cup of red wine or white grape juice.

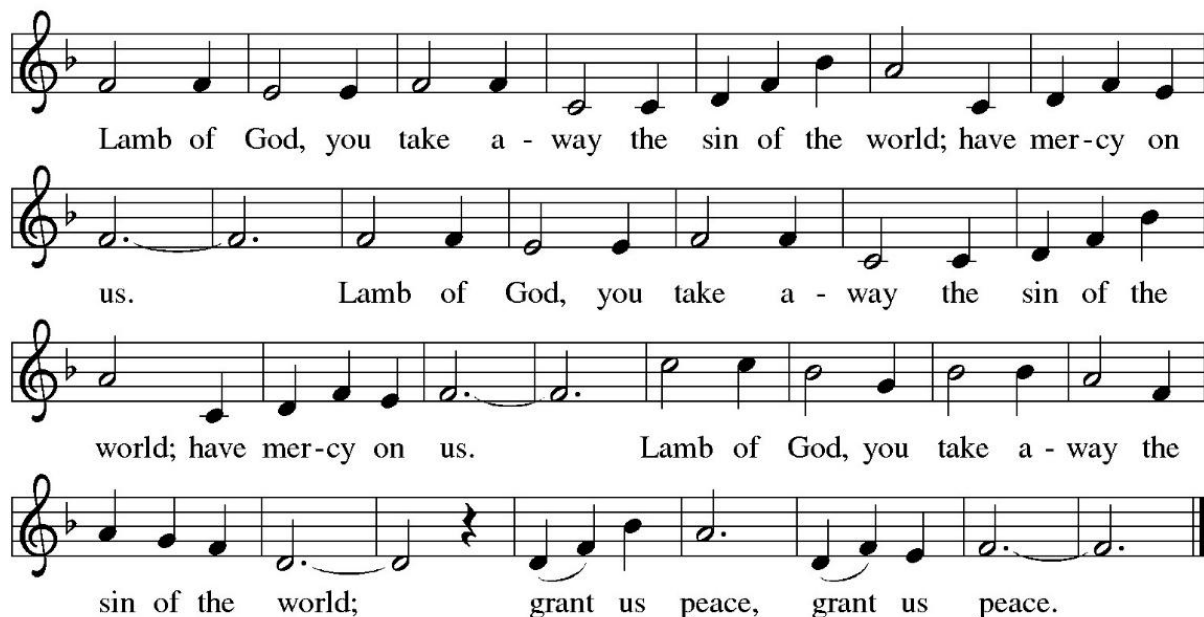
Move to the side eat and drink.

Place your empty cup in the tray provided.

All are welcome at Christ's Table. We believe Jesus is the host and the gifts of God are for everyone. Children will be offered communion unless otherwise indicated by parents. The wine is red and grape juice is white.

Please be seated.

LAMB OF GOD



COMMUNION HYMN

Goodness Is Stronger than Evil

ELW 721

Please stand as you are able.

TABLE BLESSING

P: Now may the power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into your heart, your mind, and your body to heal your wounds and, through your healing to all the earth. In Jesus' name,

All: Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: Let us pray.

Radiant God, we have seen your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In the sacrament of his body and blood you have drawn us to your heart. Send us from this table 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 Savior and Lord.

All: Amen.

SENDING

Please be seated for the announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly is invited to stand.

SENDING BLESSING

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

All: Amen.

DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Do justice. Love mercy.

All: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Amen

IMMEDIATELY AFTER SERVICE

Enjoy a delicious & healthy luncheon, courtesy of Mary & Monty Williamson's "*Fish Keg*" (plus extra salads/sides), as we give thanks for St. Paul's journey over the past year, and discern together our vision for the coming year.

Please **EVERYONE** attend! We have important questions for joint discussion, but also – as always at St. Paul's – good food, fellowship & fun.

Note on this year's theme: In the past few years, our focus necessarily has been on how we at St. Paul's can "do church" in new ways, given new realities. This year, we plan to turn our focus outward, discerning together how St. Paul's --- as an individual Christian congregation, and along with the ELCA -- can act in a world that is increasingly cruel and unjust. In the best St. Paul's tradition of shared discernment, we'll consider together a possible new 2026 mission or missions, to address the thirst felt by so many of us: to find specific, concrete ways that we can courageously challenge that cruelty and injustice, being Christ's witness and helping God's "kingdom to come" in our community and world.

THANK YOU

To our musicians: Liana German, soprano; Nicholas Marotta, mezzo-soprano.
To Marilyn Starenko, for donating flowers in memory of Ralph to beautify our sanctuary.
To everyone who brought a side dish or dessert for our Annual Meeting.
To everyone who helped prepare and serve the Soup Kitchen meal last week.
To Craig Landis, for shoveling snow last week.

PRAYER REQUESTS

For Joan Ehrenberg, suffering from a broken wrist and bruising.
For Jan Rock, as she recovers from stenoses.
For Renee Carlson, our florist, battling cancer.
For Paul Lucci, friend of LuAnne Origer, awaiting biopsy results.
For the family of Barbara Gazzolo, as they grieve her death.



To donate via Zelle, aim your device's camera at the code on the left, click on the link and follow the instructions. Or you can go to your bank's website, go to Zelle payments and look for "office@stpaulvanston.org."



WELCOME BACK
PASTOR PEG OTTE

We are thrilled to welcome back our good friend, Pr. Peg Otte, as our Pastoral Fellow for the Epiphany season (Jan. 4 – Feb. 15). We've been blessed to have Pr. Peg's leadership many times over the years – as our Pastoral Fellow in each of 2023, 2024 and 2025, and prior to that, as our interim pastor during 2019 after Pr. Tim McKenzie moved to North Carolina. Pr. Peg and her husband Randy are long-time Evanston residents who raised their three now-adult children here. Pr. Peg previously served at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Prospect Heights and St. John's Lutheran Church in Wilmette, has served as an interim minister in this synod, and for many winters, served at Shepherd by the Sea, a joint Episcopal/Lutheran congregation in Gualala, California. She is delighted to return to St. Paul's this year for the beloved season of Epiphany.