



Shepherd's Voice

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 4:6-7

A Letter from Pastor Oesch

New Year New You???

Dear Shepherd,

Okay, I'm sorry for my sarcasm right off the bat in my title. I do sincerely appreciate setting goals and striving for excellence in life. Especially SMART goals, that is, goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound**. I have nothing against this. But really? I just saw this ad for some fitness program. "🌟 Counting down to 2026 like... 🔥 New Year, new goals, SAME unstoppable you. Are you ready to crush the year ahead?" How much more cheesy and desperate can it get? Advertisements and messages, especially in the media, that surround New Years are rampant with these kinds of sentiments. Maybe you have bought into one of these messages and got really excited about a new hobby or discipline in the year 2026 or are hopeful that this year there will be change. Maybe there will be change in the struggling areas of your life. Maybe you will actually achieve a new goal. I sincerely hope so for you! However, our ultimate hope is not in ourselves, in circumstances, in the change of a calendar, or in cheesy advertisements.

I'd like to offer a Christian perspective on New Years.

Sin still exists. That's something the world fails to mention. You never hear Ryan Seacrest in New York when the ball is dropping say something like, "10, 9, 8... and remember folks, this New Year will be full of sin! 5, 4, 3, 2, 1..." Unfortunately, one of my duties as a pastor is to be honest about what's bad. We live in a world corrupted with sin. Every single part of it, inside and out is infected with a disease called sin. Sin is lawlessness, falling short of the glory of God, life without trust in God and fear of God. Unfortunately, we live in a creation right now in that reality. So honestly, this new year could be worse. We don't know what's going to happen. I'm not going to promise you more money, more prestige, a rockin' fitness bod, blissful happiness, or any kind of temporary prosperity. Those kinds of vain promises are not where true hope is found.

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Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

7691 S. University Blvd.

Centennial, CO 80122

303-798-0711 ShepherdHillsChurch.org

Member News

Celebrate Epiphany With Us!

Join us as we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord on **Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 7pm**. We gather to remember the Magi's journey and the revelation of Jesus as the Light of the world--the Savior for all nations!



Keeping of the Greens

Please join us **Saturday, January 10 at 8:30am**, to take down the CHRISTmas decorations in the Sanctuary. Coffee, juice, and donuts will be provided.

Winter Blues Dessert Night

Join us for a joy-filled evening of fellowship, winter-themed desserts, and a cozy coffee bar (ages 18+) on **Friday, January 16 from 6:30-8:30pm**. This special gathering will feature members of our Shepherd family, David and Cassie Schlecht, as they share the heart and mission behind their nonprofit ministry, *Scripture in Motion*. They will offer updates and insight for both newcomers and those already familiar with their work. Enjoy delicious treats, a warm cup of coffee, and lighthearted activities, games, and prizes throughout the evening.

Please **RSVP by January 11**. Register online or text the host, Cassie Schlecht, at (608) 572-6290. For any questions about the [sign-up sheet](#), please contact **Connie Rosel**.

Breakfast With Baby Serves 21 Families in December

On December 13, Breakfast with Baby served 40 individuals including 29 children from 17 families. Over the last year, BwB served over 200 children, and over 150 families heard the Word in both English and Spanish. After a buffet breakfast, parents shopped for clothes, diapers, wipes and other available items. For the **January 10** event, **baby wipes** and **Size 5 & 6 diapers** are needed. Also, **Size 9 & 24-month boys' clothes** and **Size 24-month girls' clothes** would be very helpful. Thank you for continuing to share God's love with your contributions of breakfast casseroles, diapers, clothing, toys and many other items!

Grandfriends Brunch / Bible Study

All Grandfriends plus anyone interested in being a grandfriend, please join us for a brunch during Bible Study with our younger generational partners on **Sunday, January 11 from 9:30-10:30am** in the **Parish Hall**.

Memorial Services

Dante Trenton Niehoff

Died: 11/8/2025

Service: 12/7/2025

John Albert Timms

Died: 12/23/2025

Service: 1/3/2026



Updates
to
Our
Church
Family



Get Ready for Our 12th Annual Chili Cookoff!!!

Join us to see whose chili reigns supreme on **Sunday, February 1, 5-8pm** in the **Gym**! Enjoy a night of chili and entertainment by our very own Infinite Grace (Praise Band). Tickets cost \$15 per person if you buy during the presale. Price at the door is \$20. Cost for kids 4th grade and younger is \$5. The family price for adults and youth (5 people maximum) is \$50.

Your ticket into the Chili Cookoff includes 10 voting tickets. You can purchase more voting tickets on site. Funds go toward SHYP's Summer Trip. Presale registration is available online or in the gym in between services on January 11, 18, or 25.

To enter your chili in the cookoff, please register online. There will be prizes for Most Unique, Spiciest, and of course, Best Overall chili! Questions? Contact **Sina** at swilliams@sothfamily.org or 707-326-8666.

January Anniversaries



- 2 Steve and Sue Berscheid, 44 years
- 6 Rolf and Judy Peterson, 65 years
- 15 Darren and Kristen Chenoweth, 31 years

NOTE: Don't see your anniversary listed? Please contact the front office to have your member information updated!

Member News

Praying with an Open Heart

This month, we are Praying with an Open Heart for...those with health issues (physical, mental, emotional).

Any month can be a hard month for those who have health issues. January can hit especially hard because we've "picked ourselves up" for the festivities of Christmas...and then the 79 days of January hit. When it seems we have nothing to look forward to in the near future, pain of any kind can feel magnified.

If we do NOT have major health issues, we should be on our knees with hands lifted up in thankfulness, because the crummy reality is: Pain comes from the effects of living in a sinful world. The hope-full reality, however, is our tender and merciful Lord knows this. God, in His Word, gives us myriad verses to ponder and pray. Not only does Scripture give encouragement and hope; our loving Father also sent His Son, Jesus, whose last words to us before ascending to heaven were: "I AM with (your name here) ALWAYS...until FOREVER." (Matthew 28:20)

Yes, we'd love to have our health issues removed. Until that time ~ whether on earth or not until we get to heaven ~ the "wilderness" of dealing with a health challenge can be a place where we spend time with God, crying out to Him as His people have for thousands of years. As a sainted member of Shepherd once shared with me: "I pray that God will remove my issue or, if not, that He will give me the strength to endure."

I'm learning (it's an on-going process!) to admit I can't handle or solve my issues by myself. I'm choosing to be vulnerable in opening up to God, to the truths of His Word (even the hard truths), and to Godly people He puts around me. Accepting help is one of the many ways God shows His love and mercy to me. Will you let Him put His loving arms around you through His Word, His people, His Sacraments?

Whether we are the ones with no or few health issues or are those who struggle with physical, mental, or emotional health, we all have the privilege of spending time in prayer for ourselves and for each other. The Sanctuary is open every Wednesday from 12-1pm for just this purpose. Prayers@sothfamily.org can be used to send out requests to members on our own or someone else's behalf. And our pastors and staff are ready and willing to pray for and with

us. For even more resources, go to our website: ShepherdHillsChurch.org and hit the "NEED HELP" tab.

[Shepherd of the Hills | Need Help](#)

Included here are Bible verses to aid you as you **Pray with an Open Heart for those with health issues**. I invite you to take time to work through these verses. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which ones especially are helpful for you and which ones might be helpful for someone you know. See the "A Way to Pray" article for some ideas of how to use them.

Our 2025-26 theme verses: Philippians 4:6-7; Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 23:3; Psalm 34:18; Psalm 40:1-3; Psalm 55:22; Psalm 147:3; Proverbs 3:5-8; Proverbs 16:24; Proverb 17:22; Isaiah 40:31; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 53:5; Jeremiah 29:11; Matthew 6:34; Matthew 11:28; John 14:27; Romans 5:3-4; Romans 12:2; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 5:29; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:7; 3 John 2; Hebrews 13:6.

A Way to Pray

Be persistent in prayer ~ pray continually, regularly. ~1 Thessalonians 5:17

Carry each other's burdens [to the Lord], and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ [which is to love your neighbor]. ~Galatians 6:2

This month, in our "Praying with an Open Heart" series, we are praying for people with health issues. In that VOICE article (above), 27 different Bible passages are listed. Below are some ways to use/pray these verses for yourself and others:

+ Write a verse on your bathroom mirror with a white-board marker. Pray a different verse each week. (This is also a great aid for memorizing Scripture!)

+ Write a verse in a card or on a postcard and mail to someone. The message can be as simple as: "I thought of you today and prayed these words over you: _____." First, everyone appreciates non-junk mail. Second, if it's written on a postcard, a mail sorter or mail carrier may see God's Word and be witnessed to by that Word.

+ Write a verse on a sticky note. Post it where you know you (or someone else) will see it as part of a daily routine. (One of my children stuck a sticky note on the freezer ice bucket, because she knew her sibling would see it at least once a day!)

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Member News / Ministries

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A Way to Pray - Continued

- + Write each verse on a different notecard. "Hide" in different parts of your home. Challenge those who visit you to find a card. Together, pray the verse, and in your heart or out loud mention someone's name.
- + If you have children, have them write the verse. (Writing while saying it is a multisensory way to learn/memorize.) Together, discuss what the verse means. Think about who you might pray for. Collect these verses (in a box, on a key ring, as a list on your phone, etc.) and cycle through them for the month of January.
- + For enhanced sensory learning, use Scrabble or Bananagrams letters or a tray of sand to "write out" the verse.
- + Write the verse on a whiteboard. Each day, speak the

verse, pray for a person, and erase one or two words. When you have memorized it, write the next verse and repeat the process.

+ Use the Shepherd written Announcements prayer lists each week and choose a verse that fits with the prayer category/person's issue.

+ If all this seems to be just too much right now, simply follow God's command and invitation: Pray!



A huge thank you to all who came and enjoyed the Flying W Christmas outing on Sunday, December 7. We had over 80 members combined from Holy Cross and Shepherd! It was good food, fellowship, and great music! We hope to do it again next year. ~Pastor Zillinger



2025 Lutheran World Relief Report

In 2025, 315,818 quilts and 179,200 school kits were created by LWR teams around the US. That's 21 shipping containers! These were sent to 15 different countries in response to disasters. About one third of the quilts and kits were used here in the United States.

Our Shepherd team (Quilts & Kits) continues to work year-round. We meet the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, 9am-noon. Drop-ins welcome. No need to be a sewist. Right now, we are especially in need of cotton bed sheets in colors or prints to be used for quilt backings. Donations can be placed in our tub in the Main Office.



End-of-year Giving for 2025

Some information to keep in mind regarding your 2025 giving:

- + the last day to give online: 12/31/25
- + the last day to give at a church service: 1/4/26
- + the last day to drop off at the church office: 1/5/26
- **All checks must be dated 12/31/25 or sooner to be accepted for 2025 giving



Loss of a Spouse

When: Saturday, January 10, 2026
10:00am-Noon

Where: Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
7691 S. University Blvd. Centennial, CO
Meeting in the Atrium

Topics:

- Going through grief
- Dealing with loneliness and anxiety
- Moving forward
- How can I have hope?
- Receiving God's forgiveness

Extra Resources:

- Is my grief normal?
- Financial and legal action steps after the death of a spouse

Register now at griefshare.org/loss

Questions? Contact our church leader at
griefshare@sothfamily.org

Member News

Bible Readings for the Month

January 4 – 2nd Sunday after Christmas

Lessons: Psalm 119:97-104; 1 Kings 3:4-15;
Ephesians 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52

January 6 – Festival of the Epiphany

Lessons: Psalm 72:1-11 (12-15); Isaiah 60:1-6;
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

January 11 – Baptism of Jesus

Lessons: Psalm 29; Isaiah 42:1-9;
Romans 6:1-11; Matthew 3:13-17

January 18 – 2nd Sunday of Epiphany; Sanctity of Human Life

Lessons: Psalm 40:1-11; Isaiah 49:1-7;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42a

January 25 – 3rd Sunday of Epiphany; Lutheran Schools Sunday

Lessons: Psalm 98 (v. 4); Isaiah 9:1-4;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-25



Usher Schedule for the Month

January 4 – 2nd Sunday after Christmas

8 am Sanctuary – Brooklyn Schuchman / Dave Stone
10:45 Sanctuary – Sandy & Bill Griffis
10:45 Gym – Ron Aukamp / Milo Samson

January 6 – Festival of the Epiphany

7 pm Sanctuary –

January 11 – Baptism of Jesus

8 am Sanctuary – Rick Monson / Paul Rodeck
10:45 Sanctuary – Josh Hoener / Lindsey Jarvi
10:45 Gym – Kathy & Chris Biondolilo

January 18 – 2nd Sunday of Epiphany; Sanctity of Human Life

8 am Sanctuary – Heidi Dudley / Chuck Place
10:45 Sanctuary –
10:45 Gym – Wayne Johnson / Charley Powers

January 25 – 3rd Sunday of Epiphany; Lutheran Schools Sunday

8 am Sanctuary – Ava Havekost / Josh Havekost
10:45 Sanctuary – Pam & Russ Robbins
10:45 Gym – Sue & Duane Feldmann



Ministry Opportunities

Priscilla Circle serves meals for families after funerals and memorial services. If you are interested in being part of this circle as a helper or to bring food for these occasions, please contact **Sandy Garberding** at RSGarb@comcast.net or **Kay Stolzenbach** at gkstolzenbach@comcast.net.

Loving Meals Ministry

When someone in our Shepherd family has surgery or becomes ill, help with preparing meals may be needed. If you or someone you know could use help with small meals on a short-term basis, please contact the church office at **303-798-0711** and you will be contacted by one of our meal coordinators.

Contemporary Service Altar Setup/Cleanup Team

This setup/cleanup team takes turns preparing the altar for the Contemporary services by filling candles and setting out the altar ware on Sunday mornings. After the service, things get put away. It doesn't take much time and there are no meetings to attend. To be a part of this team, please contact either **Mary Powers** at powersworld@live.com or **Luanne Reimer** at reimer.luanne@gmail.com.

The women of **Altar Circle** prepare the chancel area in the Sanctuary for the traditional services. Communion preparations, changing paraments, filling candles with oil and vacuuming are just a few of the duties performed before services. On Communion Sundays, there is cleanup after the services. We get together for a meeting once a quarter and enjoy fellowship, a devotion and treats! We're always looking for women to help with preparations and Communion cleanup. The work is shared among our members so it isn't a big commitment of time. Even if you don't want to come to the meetings, please consider assisting with Communion cleanup after the services. Contact **Luanne Reimer** through email at reimer.luanne@gmail.com.

Used Eyeglasses and Hearing Aids

Another 81 pair of eyeglasses have been collected. **We are nearing 2000 pair collected since 2010!** The eyeglasses have been delivered to the Lions Club and will be distributed to those in need throughout the world. Several hearing aids were also collected and given to the Sertoma organization. Place any eyeglasses and hearing aids in the designated basket in the Welcome Center cry room. Your contributions are a blessing to many! Thank you!

Missionary of the Month – January 2026

Alternatives Pregnancy Center

Alternatives Pregnancy Center is a nonprofit organization that provides a safe and trusted environment to process a pregnancy decision, compromised sexual health, or mixed emotions after an abortion. Privacy and confidentiality are a priority. Their compassionate and qualified staff take pride in offering holistic care to address physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. All services, such as ultrasounds for expectant mothers, are available at no cost. They do not provide emergency contraception. They do not refer for or perform abortions. Therefore, Alternatives receives no financial gain from a pregnancy decision. They treat all people with dignity and respect.

January is Sanctity of Human Life Month. Shepherd will focus on the pro-life efforts of this organization. Pray for the unborn and for all of God's children.



Who Are Stephen Ministers?

Stephen Ministers are members of Shepherd of the Hills who have gone through 50 hours of training in providing high-quality Christian care to individuals experiencing a crisis or challenge such as divorce, grief, loss of a job, hospitalization, relocation, or loneliness. Stephen Ministers are each assigned a care receiver and meet with that care receiver for about an hour a week. This caring relationship will last for as long as the care receiver needs it.

If you or someone you know would benefit from a Stephen Minister, please contact our Stephen Leader: **Ron Manuella** (303-587-0001) or **Pastor Stoltenow**.

Seeking Him Prayer Group

The Seeking Him prayer group meets on the **third Thursday** of the month, **6:30-7:30pm** in the **Atrium**, to pray for the Staff and Lay Leaders of the congregation based on specific prayer requests that come from them. The people who meet enjoy the fellowship and the opportunity to pray for our church. You're welcome to attend and join in this ministry of prayer. Our first meeting of 2026 will be on **Thursday, January 15**.

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How does real change happen in Christ's reality?

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Real hope and *good* change is only possible in Christ. In His word and in His body of believers. Our hope for change is in a God who transforms us and renews our minds with His love and victory over death, sin, and the devil on a cross and in an empty tomb. Your hope in this new year of our Lord, 2026, is found in Christ and in a community of believers that speaks His word to you and administers His sacraments to you. Embrace it and crush it! There, there's your cheesy ad. ;)

God is for you, my friends, in this new calendar year! Blessings to you in 2026!

Peace,

Pastor Ben



I am the vine; you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me and I in him,
he it is that bears much fruit,
for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

Youth

Welcome to the Family Faith Milestone

On **January 11**, during the Worship Services we will celebrate the Faith Milestone Welcome to the Family. During the services we will recognize, celebrate, and bless all God's children who have been baptized in 2025 at Shepherd of the Hills. The families of those baptized are also invited to a luncheon on January 11, at noon, in the Parish Hall.



January Dates to Remember:

SHYP

January 4 (Sun) – 12:30-2pm

Xtreme

- **January 11** (Sun) – 9:30-10:30am, Parish Hall, Grandfriends Brunch
- **January 11** (Sun) – 12:30-2pm

Young Adults

- **January 4, 11, 18, 25** (Sun) – 7-9pm - Young Adults Sports Night
- **January 25** (Sun) – Lunch at 12:15pm. Meet in the Gym

Young Adults

Young Adult Sports Night

Calling all young adults AND their friends! Beginning **January 4**, join us in January and February **every Sunday** from **7-9pm**, and starting in March, **every Thursday** from **7-9pm** for a chance to meet new people, build friendships, play some volleyball, basketball, dodge ball, and have a short group led discussion on topics from today's world. For any questions, contact Sina at swilliams@sothfamily.org.



Youth Group Notes

Shepherd of the Hills' **Spiritual Formation Plan** encompasses your child's spiritual formation from the womb all the way to when they leave the nest after high school. It is age appropriate and designed to assist your children to mature as Lutheran Christians so they may take a joyful stand for Christ.

For specific information about Shepherd's Confirmation Program, please contact **Pastor Ben Oesch** at BOesch@sothfamily.org. For information about junior and senior high youth groups, please contact **Sina Williams** at swilliams@sothfamily.org. For information about Family Ministry, contact **Jodie Stoltenow** at jstoltenow@sothfamily.org. You can also find specific youth information and upcoming events online under either the Connect tab or the Calendar tab at ShepherdHillsChurch.org.



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The deadline for the February issue of the Shepherd's Voice is January 19. Please have all articles entered into the Communication Request system by this date.

POSTMASTER

Send Address Changes to:
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7691 S. University Blvd.
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