

# Community Lutheran Church

## January 2025 Newsletter



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Pastor Karis Message



### Celebrating Epiphany: The Tradition of Three Kings' Day

Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, marks a significant event in the Christian liturgical calendar. Known in the United States as Three Kings' Day, this holiday commemorates two key biblical events: the visit of the three wise men (the Magi) to the newborn Jesus and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. While the term "Epiphany" isn't explicitly mentioned in the Bible, its roots are deeply embedded in Christian tradition.

The word "Epiphany" originates from the Greek term ἐπιφάνεια (epiphaneia), meaning "manifestation" or "revelation." This term signifies the divine revelation of Christ to the world, most notably marked by the visit of the Magi. The term is found in the book of 3 Maccabees 2:9, where it is translated as "manifestation" in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The actual account of the Magi is found in Matthew 2:1-12, though the Bible itself does not specify their names or the number of visitors. Over time, tradition has given names to the Magi—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar—and assigned them symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Epiphany is celebrated in various ways around the world, with unique customs reflecting the cultural significance of the holiday. One notable tradition is found in central Europe, known as "chalking the doors." During this custom, people—often dressed as the three kings—visit homes and mark the doorframes with a special blessing. The marks are made with chalk in the form of crosses and the initials "C+M+B." These letters represent either the names of the Magi—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar—or the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which translates to "May Christ bless this house."

As we step into 2025, Community Lutheran Church continues to reflect the heart of God's kingdom through our commitment to inclusivity. This year, we remain steadfast in our mission to open our doors to all, especially to those who have been marginalized or hurt by religion. We are a church that strives to embody the welcoming nature of Christ's love, ensuring that no one is excluded from the grace and community that define our faith.

The spirit of inclusivity is more than just a message—it is a reflection of the very essence of God's calling to serve others. The Magi knew this Christ child would change the world with his unlimited love for YOU! This calling resonates deeply within our congregation, where people are drawn not only by our denominational affiliation but by the genuine, welcoming environment we provide.

As we look ahead to the year, we remain dedicated to fostering a space where healing can take place for those who have experienced pain or exclusion, whether from societal pressures or past experiences with faith. We are committed to being a place of refuge and empowerment, where the marginalized find a voice, the excluded are welcomed, and all are invited to participate in the abundant life that Christ offers.

Peace,  
Pastor Karis

### Hospitality & Welcome Ministry

Happy New Year greetings and blessings to everyone!

Coffee hours in the new year of 2025 will continue to be held between the services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month; so the January coffee hours are currently scheduled for January 12th and 26th.

Please join us on January 26th for a special coffee hour in recognition of Frank Johnson (council president), Jim Landis (treasurer), and Dave Bartges (finance/database leader) for their many years of service to Community Lutheran Church.

As always, please be aware of any announcements regarding any possible changes to the calendar, especially due to inclement weather, etc. As we move forward into a new year at CLC, please consider volunteering for the Hospitality Team. I'm sure you will enjoy being a member of such a great group of individuals. The time commitment is minimal but very much appreciated. Please feel free to talk to me about any questions you may have.

See you in church, and at our next coffee hour!

~Sharon Potter, Team Lead

### Food Pantry Ministry

I am happy to report that the Delaware Food Bank has been a wonderful asset. We are buying more varieties of food products than ever before. We are now offering our families fresh apples, potatoes, nuts, dried fruit, fish sticks, and much more. I wish everyone could have been at the pantry for Christmas. The excitement was contagious. It was a wonderful way to start Christmas.

The Food Bank does not have everything we normally provide so there will still be an opportunity to make donations. Some of those items and the best prices are:

Cooking oil - Dollar Tree      Margarine - Dollar General or Aldi  
Shelf stable chocolate milk - Dollar Tree      Ramin noodles - Aldi's

Thank you to all who have signed up to be on the receiving team. This team was created to be available when we receive a shipment from the Food Bank, which is typically several thousand pounds. If anyone wishes to be a part of this team please let me know.

~Mona Burns, Team Lead

LGBTQIA+ Ministry

LGBTQIA+ Celebration Dinner

Wasn't our first Holiday Season dinner an "over-the-top" celebration? DiFebo's catering left no one hungry plus the side dishes and appetizers were a great hit! Thanks to all who helped make the dinner memorable!

~Henry Eckhardt & Randi Johnson



Mission Development

Thank You!

To all members that have returned their CLC Commitment Cards. Everyone should have received an e-mail with a Mission Development letter and attached commitment card for your time/talesnts/financial commitment in support of the 2025 CLC missions. If you did not, please pick one up from the box in the narthex.

Please prayerfully consider your time and your talents and financial contributions to CLC 2025 missions!

Please complete your commitment card and return it either by email, put it in the offering plate, or place it in the box in the narthex by January 15th.

~David Potter, Team Lead

Upcoming Birthdays

- January 20 - Alan King
- January 21 - Sandra Wachter-Myers
- February 1 - Debby Hiob
- February 2 - Dean Pedersen
- February 6 - Jen Read
- February 17 - Jim Hartsig

If you wish to have your birthday posted in the newsletter, please sign the list in the Narthex.



Eyeglasses and Hearing Aids Needed

I'd like to let everyone know there is a need for used eyeglasses and hearing aids. There is collection box on the small table in Luther Hall for donations. The articles will be picked up occasionally by Alan King who will deliver them to the Lord Baltimore Lions Club in Ocean View.

~Submitted by Alan King



“Creation Care” written by Larry Ryan

During the celebration of Christmas, we are reminded of the determination of the Magi to Honor God’s gift of His Son to humanity. Through This great gift sent by our creator, we are called to a Loving response, so we ask this question: How can we give back to God for the Loving gift of His only son. and what actions will we take in response to this great gift given to us by our creator.

In Today’s world, can we be as determined and steadfast as the Magi were when we give honor and glory to God? No, probably not, but I want to share some of the ways that the Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA Creation Care Ministry team honors God for the gifts that God’s green earth lovingly provides; the air, water, and soil, bestowed on all of us for our sustenance.

The ELCA 1993 social statement: [“Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice”](#) helped to offer a vision of God’s intention for creation and for humanity as creation’s caregivers; acknowledges humanity’s separation from God and from the rest of creation as the central cause of the environmental crisis; expresses hope and heeds the call to justice and commitment.

More recently, (April 2023) the ELCA with input from the Delaware-Maryland synod Creation Care Ministry team, released a new [social message on “Earth’s Climate Crisis”](#)

[Katherine Hayhoe](#), A well-known Christian Climate Scientist who is also a distinguished professor and awarded an endowed chair position at Texas Tech. University. Hayhoe provides a hopeful model of a Christian response to Earth’s Climate Crisis. [In her end of 2024 “Talking Climate” newsletter](#). At the end of this newsletter professor Hayhoe provides us with what actions we can take honoring God by caring for creation with this invitation; As environmentalist and [Third Act](#) founder Bill McKibben [often says](#), “the most important thing an individual can do is not be such an individual. Join together with others to make change!”

If Creation Care ministry resonates with you as a way for you to respond to our call to Love others and honor God and his gifts to us, then consider joining a creation care ministry team through actions at Community Lutheran Church.

~Submitted by Pastor Karis

## Caring for God’s Creation



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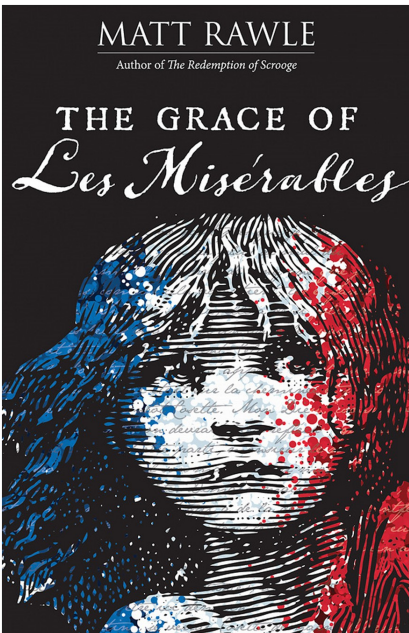
### Lenten Study Group

The Rev Debbie Scott is leading a Lenten study beginning Wednesday, March 5 at 10am at Community in Luther Hall. This bible discussion lasts six weeks.

Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* is a truly epic story. Whether you’ve read the novel, seen the Broadway musical, heard its soundtrack, or seen the several screen adaptations, you already know the power in the story.

In the [six-week Lenten study \*The Grace of Les Misérables\*](#), author and pastor [Matt Rawle](#) dives into six ideals found in the story—grace, justice, poverty, revolution, love, and hope—each represented by a character in Hugo’s story.

In keeping with his previous works, [Rawle](#) brings us to the intersection of Church and Pop Culture by drawing parallels between the iconic story and musical and our Christian calling, inspiring us to both understand our faith and live it out in the world.



## Church Council Retreat



Saturday January 18, 2025 9am - 4pm  
Luther Hall



Some Ministry Team Leaders have been invited to join the Council at 12pm. A pizza lunch will be served for all participants. As a team leader, you are leading an outwardly facing ministry that reaches various cultures within different neighborhoods. Our goal is to have everyone in sync with the Community direction, especially when it comes to our demographics, marketing, and financial planning. Please also read "Radical Welcome" as this book forms the basis of our ministry approach.

## Special Music

Sunday January 19 8:45am & 10:30am



Community Lutheran Church is excited to welcome Diana Wagner back to worship. Diana will share her musical gift in worship, bringing her unique sound to both services.

A well-known area acoustic musician and folksinger, Diana preserves and shares a blend of contemporary, historic, and liturgical music. Born in Northern Wisconsin, she plays acoustic and classical guitar, dulcimer, banjo, mandolin, and a variety of percussion hand instruments.

We look forward to having her enrich our worship experience!

## Monday Study Group

I wish to share with you words from Doris Ann Pearce:

"In John Chapter 4 Jesus comes in contact with the 'Woman at the well' who is a Samaritan. At the end of his conversation in verse 23, He tells her, 'God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'" As a gardener tends to his garden with feeding, pruning, and watering, so must we as humans cultivate our spirits.

You can share and learn about spirituality in our Monday morning studies from the writings of various spiritual teachers from the Middle Ages to the present time. These spiritual teachers have written great insights relative to the spirit that dwells in us as humans."

We will conclude our study of Soul Boom and plan to start a review of "Ignition Spirituality" on June 13th. All are welcome and no homework or books are required at the present time. Contact Dave Bartges with questions at (302) 537-1236 or [davebartges@gmail.com](mailto:davebartges@gmail.com)

~Dave Bartges, Group Lead

## Newsletter Articles

The deadline for articles to be included in each monthly newsletter will be the **first of each month**

Submitted articles should be created in MS Word, Adobe PDF file, or just typed into an e-mail.

Photos should be in jpeg format.

The editor's e-mail address is: [judy@dayhoff.org](mailto:judy@dayhoff.org).

## Thank You! Thank You!

Thank you all for the generous Christmas gift. It was completely unexpected!

It is a pleasure to work with you all in this dynamic and growing congregation.

Pastor Earl Janssen

Thank you for your thoughtfulness – Dave Bartges

## Community Lutheran Church Begins a Grief Group

At Community Lutheran Church, we are committed to ensuring that no one faces grief alone. Starting Thursday, February 6, we will offer a grief support group from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm in Luther Hall. This group will meet the first Thursday of each month.

Bethann McIntosh, a Certified Grief Recovery Method Specialist, will co-lead this group to offer support, guidance, and understanding during this difficult time. We invite you to join us as we walk together through this healing journey.



### Bereavement Support at Community Lutheran Church

If you're wondering whether a bereavement support group could be helpful in navigating the grief you might be feeling—whether due to the death of a loved one, the loss of family due to political divisions, or losing an old community after moving—the answer may be yes. Grief support groups offer a different, yet equally effective, way to process your loss and begin the healing journey.

Here are five key benefits of joining a grief support group:

#### 1. Provides Hope

Grief is a journey, often unpredictable with its twists, turns, and setbacks. While each experience of loss is unique, the collective experience of grief in a group setting provides hope. Those who are further along in their grief journey can offer reassurance and show that it is possible to find joy again. For those just beginning their healing process, this affirmation can be an important step toward hope and healing.

#### 2. You Are Not Alone

One of the most powerful benefits of a grief support group is the reminder that you are not alone. Grief can feel deeply isolating, especially when others around you seem to move on with their lives. In a support group, you'll find others who share similar struggles, feelings, and experiences. In these moments, the group reminds you, "We understand. We've been there." This sense of solidarity is incredibly comforting during such a difficult time.

#### 3. A Different Perspective

No two grief journeys are the same, but those who have experienced similar loss may offer valuable advice, fresh insights, or different perspectives that could help you move forward in your own journey. Listening to others share their stories can provide new tools and ways of thinking, and help you process your emotions more fully.

#### 4. Paying it Forward

Participating in a support group not only provides support but also gives the opportunity to give back. Sharing our experiences with others can be a healing process in itself. Helping others along their journey can instill a renewed sense of purpose and healing through sharing stories.

#### 5. A Place of Belonging

As humans, we all have a deep-seated need to belong, to feel part of a community. After a loss, it can be easy to feel isolated or different from others, as though our grief sets us apart. Being surrounded by others who truly understand what you're going through can bring comfort and healing as you move forward in your grief journey.



English as a Second Language

Abre la Mente, Community Lutheran’s ESL Team of teachers, coaches, and friends, will begin classes on **Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 10 am**

We will meet for an hour each Thursday until May 1, 2025, taking off only April 17 for Maundy Thursday. **Fall classes will begin on Thursday, September 11, 2025**

The Abre la Mente team will begin our first sessions with welcomes and introductions in order to make our students feel safe and at ease in their classes.

Formally and informally, using both oral and written material, we will determine each student’s level of English proficiency so that we can assign “beginners”, “intermediate”, and “advanced” English speakers to the correct group.

Currently we have 21 students on the roster, and 10 teachers and coaches on the staff. Our plan, once we get the classes formed, is to have two teachers to each of the three groups so that they can do group work and give individual help as needed. This will also enable our faculty and staff to rotate out when they travel or have other obligations on class days. Our plan is to submit a monthly article to the newsletter to keep members updated.



There has been active concern regarding safety and comfort level of students in the current anti-immigrant climate of our country and the news that the incoming administration wants to lift the ban on arresting immigrants at hospitals, schools, and churches. The Council Retreat will address these concerns. The group was enthusiastic about following up on this.

Patricia Riviera is a friend of CLC and also on the Board of La Esperanza who does good work training those who work with migrants how to best keep them safe. Pastor Karis will contact her.

Bryant Garcia is a co-chair at La Esperanza and a lawyer. He teaches teachers and students how to know and exercise their rights. We will contact him and ask for a training for our teachers and students.

The group has plans for rounding up supplies through donations and using copied handouts for curriculum until we get organized enough to know our numbers and our budget. We plan to have staff care for any small children who might accompany a parent to class. Some of us have offered to provide refreshments for the little ones, and others will bring coffee for the adults.

We are enthusiastic and feel as though we are supported by CLC. It will be a reciprocal program: They will learn from us, and we will learn from them. All of us will be changed in small ways and large. We’re working for a Radical Welcome!

**A Heartfelt Thank You**

Dear Beloved Community,

As we reflect on the blessings of the Christmas season, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for all that you do. Your kindness and generosity have truly touched my heart, especially with the thoughtful Christmas appreciation gift you shared—not only with me but also with the entire staff.

Your unwavering dedication to Community Lutheran Church continues to inspire me every day. Your support has made a profound and lasting impact on my ministry, and I feel incredibly blessed to serve alongside such a compassionate and faithful congregation.

Thank you for your tireless efforts to spread love, kindness, and compassion in all that you do. Your actions are a shining example of Christ’s love in the world, and I am honored to walk this journey of faith with you.

I am deeply grateful for each of you, and I look forward to all that God has in store for us as we continue to serve together.

With sincere thanks and blessings, Pastor Karis

**Mission Statement**

Glorifying God by accepting all people as we are created.



**Community Lutheran Church**

**Vision Statement**

**We believe all people are created in God's image.**

We accept, welcome, and embrace people of every race, color, culture, age, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, faith story, economic situation, physical and mental ability, educational level, work history, political affiliation, or citizenship status.

All are welcome to the worship life of this congregation, including access to the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and all are welcome and encouraged to join in our congregational life and ministries.

By accepting all people as we are created, we are committed to the work of anti-racism, social and economic justice, and to making inclusivity a reality for our community.



**Presiding Bishop Eaton Issues Pastoral Message on Syria**

*"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." Isaiah 9:2*

Dear friends in Christ,

Last week, much of the world was surprised to hear that the people of Syria were awaking to a new day. After more than 50 years of authoritarian rule, the regime of Bashar al-Assad was swiftly and decisively ended by Syrian opposition forces that, even now, are beginning to form the government that will lead Syria going forward. Having experienced almost 14 years of civil war and political instability, along with a devastating earthquake, many Syrians are rejoicing at this news as a sign of hope and new possibility. Given Syria's historic place in the annals of history, its ethnic and religious diversity, and its geographic position in the heart of the Middle East, the international community is rightly concerned about how to support Syria's political transition.

The al-Assad regime was characterized in part by devastating violence against civilians. More than 14 million Syrians were displaced, and many of them became refugees during those years, fleeing to find sanctuary elsewhere in Syria or around the world, including here in the United States. Some minority groups enjoyed protection or at least a "status quo" stability, provided they did not challenge the regime's authoritarian rule. Today, four generations of Syrians who have lived under the al-Assad regime are anxious about what will come next. Israel's and Turkey's occupation of some Syrian lands has stoked fear of regional responses to the regime change.

In the ELCA, we recognize that some of our members are of Syrian nationality or heritage. Through ecumenical bodies such as the Middle East Council of Churches, we have long been in relationship with the Syrian Christian communities, which date back to the earliest days of the church and whose members live and worship today as a religious minority that is not always welcomed or accepted. These Christians hope that a new Syria will include a place of safety, security and freedom of worship for them and their neighbors. Syria's diversity is integral to the fabric of Syrian society and should be protected.

In this Advent season of expectation, please join me in praying for all the people of Syria. We pray that those who have walked in suffering, oppression and occupation will be liberated by our liberating God. We pray for political prisoners to be set free, for families to be reunited, for those wronged to secure justice, and for all Syrians to live, work and worship in peace. We pray also for those who mourn the dead and missing, and who fear the uncertain future.

If your prayer moves you to action, I encourage you to give to the Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) Middle East appeal, which will continue to send aid to our partners, the Middle East Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, and the Lutheran World Federation, as they support those in need in Syria in the coming days.

In Advent hope,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**ReconcilingWorks**  
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



**Community Lutheran Church**

