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PRAYER CHAIN REQUESTS

Please call the office for immediate prayers




Living in the Word...that the Word may live in others.

Living Word Lutheran Church

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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Mon - Fri 9 am - 2 pm

SUNDAY SCHEDULE
9:15 am Adult study

IN TOUCH

with the ministry and people of Living Word

Volume 35, Issue 1

January 4, 2026

"Pondering the Star and the Wise Men"

Matthew tells us about a group of wise men who traveled from the East to see the newborn King. This is a fascinating part of the story that may produce a number of questions. What does it say? After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea when Herod was king, magi from the East came to Jerusalem. They asked where the child was who had been born King of the Jews. They said that they had seen His star from the East and had come to worship Him. When King Herod heard this, it bothered him and everyone in Jerusalem. He gathered all the chief priests and scribes and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They told him He would be born in Bethlehem because of what was written by the prophet: You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah are not the least among the rulers of Judah for from you will come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel. Then Herod secretly called the magi and found out from them when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and told them to go and search carefully for the young Child. He told them to tell him when they found Him so that he could come and worship Him, too. After hearing the king, they left Jerusalem and the star which they had seen in the East went ahead of them and finally stopped over where the young Child was. Seeing the star gave them great joy. When they came into the house, they saw the young Child with his mother Mary and then fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. After this, they were warned in a dream to not return to Herod. So, they took another route to their own country. What does it mean?

God revealed Jesus' birth with a star. Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem after they saw a significant star in the sky. They claimed that the star had revealed to them that the King of the Jews had recently been born, and they wanted to worship Him. This brings up at least two questions. Who were the magi and how could a star reveal the birth of Jesus? The magi were men known for their wisdom. They served as astronomers, counselors, and king makers. I heard recently that magi once appeared before a Roman emperor and frightened him greatly because they had the influence to depose any ruler. These men are similar to the wise men who served Nebuchadnezzar when Daniel was in Babylon. The star that appeared is not explained in the Bible. But there are two Bible passages that might give us some clues. The first is where God created the sun, moon, and stars for "signs and seasons." The second is where Balaam prophesied that "a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." Matthew doesn't refer to either, but they may explain why the magi were convinced that a particular star had revealed to them that the Christ had been born. Have you ever pondered how or why God used a star to reveal the birth of His Son? It is beyond my understanding how a star could reveal anything. But these magi had somehow learned how to read the stars and God revealed to them that Jesus had been born.

God revealed Jesus' birth in the Bible. The arrival of the magi caused a big stir in Jerusalem. Wicked King Herod was troubled and this caused the rest of the city to be troubled as well. "It is no surprise that King Herod ... was disturbed when the Magi came to Jerusalem... Herod was not the rightful king from the line of David. In fact he was not even a descendent of Jacob, but was descended from Esau and thus was an Edomite."¹ Before meeting with the magi, Herod asked the chief priests and scribes to tell him where the Christ was to be born. The religious leaders pointed him to Micah 5:2 which promised that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Have you ever pondered why God revealed the birth of His Son in the Bible? It must be that He wanted people to know. Knowing the future would give hope to the people as they looked forward to God's promise of a future ruler.

(Continued on Page 5)

January 2026 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Years Day Office Closed	2	3
Christmas Break—No Preschool						
4 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Worship Traditional Communion Hymnal Service Epiphany Observed	5 No Preschool	6 9am–Noon Preschool Resumes 10:00am Push Prayer	7 9am–Noon Preschool	8 9am–Noon Preschool 7:00pm Council Meeting	9 9am–Noon Preschool	10
11 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Blended Worship Service	12 9am–Noon Preschool	13 9am–Noon Preschool 10:00am Push Prayer	14 9am–Noon Preschool	15 9am–Noon Preschool	16 9am–Noon Preschool	17
18 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Blended Communion Worship Service	19 No Preschool Martin Luther King Day Observed	20 9am–Noon Preschool 10:00am Push Prayer	21 9am–Noon Preschool	22 9am–Noon Preschool	23 9am–Noon Preschool	24
25 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Blended Worship Service	26 9am–Noon Preschool	27 9am–Noon Preschool 10:00am Push Prayer	28 9am–Noon Preschool	29 9am–Noon Preschool	30 9am–Noon Preschool	31



This Week at Living Word

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Traditional Hymnal Communion Worship Service Epiphany	5	6 Preschool Resumes 9am-Noon Preschool 10:00am Push Prayer	7 9am-Noon Preschool	8 9am-Noon Preschool 7:00 pm Council Meeting	9 9am-Noon Preschool	10

Stewardship Snapshot

December 24th (Christmas Eve)

11 Worshipped
8 Watched Online
 19 Total Worshipped

Financial Support

\$275.00 General Fund Offering

December 25th (Christmas Day)

11 Worshipped

Financial Support

\$1,575.00 General Fund Offering

Stewardship Snapshot

December 28th

21 Worshipped
5 Watched Online
 26 Total Worshipped

Financial Support

\$760.00 General Fund Offering
\$180.00 Building Use (God Is Able)
\$940.00 Total General Fund Deposit

Devotional Time

Opportunities to Connect with God

PUSH PRAYER meets every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. to pray for our church, community and world. We welcome requests (call 708-403-9673) or visit our website to send in your prayer request, or join us for 30-40 minutes each week. We are always looking for people to join us in prayer to our Lord.

RADIO & TV OPPORTUNITIES

- **Worship Anew**—8:00 a.m. Sunday - Comcast channel 184 (TLN) & 8 (SD) , WPWR channel 50, AT&T U-verse channel 1008 (HD) & 8 (SD), Dish Network # 8495; 10:30 a.m. Sunday - DIRECTV channel 377 (TCT)
- **The Lutheran Hour** 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sundays on 1230 AM; and 9:30 a.m. Sundays on 1580 AM

DEVOTION OF THE WEEK ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. *Philippians 2:6-7*

O Sovereign God! You have humbled yourself in order to exult us. You became poor so that we might become rich. You came to us so that we can come to you. You took upon yourself our humanity in order to raise us up into eternal life. All this comes through your grace, free and unmerited; all this through your beloved Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are gathered here for prayer in the knowledge of this mystery and this wonder. We come to praise you, to proclaim and hear your word. We know that we have no strength to do so unless you make us free to lift our hearts and thoughts to you. Be present now in our midst, we pray. Through your Holy Spirit open for us the way to come to you, that we may see with our own eyes your light which has come into the world, and then in the living of our lives become your witnesses.

VERSE OF THE MONTH ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. *John 1:14*

CAPTURED BY GRACE is the first book that the Bible study class had began with. They started a couple of months ago, and it is led by Neal Hartz. Classes have resumed this Sunday. The group will be doing one chapter a week, each chapter is basically a different topic, so if you can't make it for the entire book, you won't be behind. The following study will be based on the book, A Life Beyond Amazing. If you have any questions, or need a book, please see Neal.



*Happy Baptism
Birthday!*

Jan 4

Eleanor Galik

Jan 8

John Paul Lange



Jan 16

Beverly Hodo

Jan 19

Dave Holloway

Mission of the Month

January 2026 Mission of the Month



GIDEONS
INTERNATIONAL

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”... Matthew 28:19

The Gideons International provides Bibles and New Testaments to people all over the World. They work with hotels and also distribute Scriptures in strategic locations so they are available to those who want them, as well as to those who may not know they need them. They are a body of believers dedicated to making the Word of God available to everyone and, together with the local church, reaching souls for Christ.

DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH was Bethesda Lutheran Ministries which is their former name, their new name is AbleLight. They are still located in the same location in Wisconsin however.

MISSION OF THE MONTH for January is Gideons International. Phil Hauze will be giving a short presentation following the worship service on Sunday morning. There will also be some literature for you to browse through on a table in the fellowship hall. As always thank you for your overwhelming generosity.

PRESCHOOL IS GROWING. Mrs. Diana will be a very busy teacher for the winter semester of preschool. She will be welcoming three new students this month, all boys. Since the start of preschool in September, she has doubled the number of students. She will now have 8 students. One student is 5 days, one will be 4 days, two are three days, and 4 students are 2 days a week for right now. Keep up the good work Diana.

COUNCIL MEETING is scheduled for this coming Thursday evening. Main topics that they will be discussing will be the financial updates from Bill, preschool updates from Diana and Call committee updates from both Ken and Diana. If there is any issues or concerns you would like to have addressed, please see Neal, Ken or Bill on Sunday and they will have it added to the agenda.

"Pondering the Star and the Wise Men"

(Continued on Page 5)

God hid Jesus' location from Herod. Although the religious leaders had told him what the Bible said, King Herod chose to use a conversation with the magi to get more information. He started by asking them when the star had appeared. And he concluded by asking them to search for the Child and let him know His location. He acted as if He wanted to worship the Child as well. Later on, the magi did find the Child, but they did not go back to King Herod because God warned them in a dream not to return to the king. Have you ever pondered why Herod didn't go to Bethlehem himself? Somehow, despite the magi's story about the star and the Bible's prophecy about Bethlehem, he didn't go himself to look for the Child. It seems that God was keeping him blind to Jesus' whereabouts. First, he was blind because of his sin. His heart had been hardened by many years of bad decisions. Second, he was blind because God kept the magi from returning to him with the Child's location.

God revealed Jesus' location to the wisemen. After hearing the king's deceitful words, the magi traveled toward Bethlehem. They noticed quickly that the star they had seen in the East was now leading them to the place where Jesus lived. It moved ahead of them but then stopped over the exact house. Seeing the star guiding them caused them great joy. And when they were able to go inside the house, they reverently bowed before the Child² and worshiped Him. They also presented very costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Have you ever pondered why God led the magi to Jesus? Of all the people in the world, why did God choose to send foreigners from another country when there were plenty of religious Jewish people close by? Perhaps the reason is that they, like the shepherds, believed in God's promises and wanted to be a part of the celebration.

How does it apply?

Thank God for what He has revealed. Take a minute ponder the fact that God had revealed Himself to the world. Whether by a difficult to understand starry sky or the clear teaching of the Scriptures, God has revealed Himself to people through the years. Imagine what it would be like if God had not done that. We wouldn't know. Nobody would know. And we would be lost without Him.

Thank God for His divine protection. Take a minute to ponder how God protected the Child and the wisemen from harm. If King Herod had believed the prophecy, he could have sent a regiment of soldiers along with the magi. But Herod didn't completely believe the prophecy. Think also how the lives of the magi were saved by the warning in the dream. If they had returned to Jerusalem, Herod could have forced them to show him the Child's whereabouts or be killed. But God had everything under control. He protected the magi and the Child. The same God who protected them so long ago, will take watch over you as you serve Him.

Thank God for the gift of His Son. While we are thanking God for revealing things to us, let us not forget the main focus of the story. God sent His Son into the world for a wonderful purpose. Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins. He did this to pay the price for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. This was so important to God, that He wouldn't let anyone (King Herod) or anything get in the way of accomplishing it.

Conclusion

As we study the birth of Christ, it is not wrong to be interested in the details of kings, magi, shepherds, and angels. But always get back to the right focus. This is the story of how God revealed Himself to mankind. His plan was designed and promised long before it happened. The prophecies that were given many years before show that God had it planned all along. Now, almost two thousand years later, His plan has been accomplished and is still providing what this world needs most—salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1-4-2026 Message Outline

“All Nations”

“May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.”

Psalm 72

1) All nations will bask in Christ's LIGHT.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ² See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴ “Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. ⁶ Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. All from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD. Isaiah 60:1-6

2) All nations will behold Christ's LOVE.

I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:1-12

3) All nations will bow before Christ's LORDSHIP.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12

When they saw the star,
they were overjoyed.

— Matthew 2:10

