

**ST. MARK EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
OF MECHANICSBURG  
6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY  
FEBRUARY 16, 2025**



**SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES**

**8:30 am - Sanctuary & Zoom Blended Worship Service**

**9:45 am - Sunday Church School and Children's Choir**

**11:00 am - Quiet Service**

**Rev. Marleen Griffith-Stull, Pastor**

**Pastor's Cell Phone: 878-295-2173**

**Pastor's Email: [revmarleen@stmarkmburg.com](mailto:revmarleen@stmarkmburg.com)**

**Karen Fisher, Office Manager**

**Karen's Cell Phone: 717-580-7507**

**Church Office: 717-766-4482**

**Office Email: [kfisher@stmarkmburg.com](mailto:kfisher@stmarkmburg.com)**

**Office Hours: 10:00 AM-1:00 PM - Monday through Thursday**

**Denise Hirn, Director of Children's Choir**

**Denise's Cell Phone: 717-802-1064**

**Email: [denisehirn@hotmail.com](mailto:denisehirn@hotmail.com)**

**Brad Hull, Director of Music**

**Brad's Cell Phone: 202-738-2795**

**Emil: [bradleyjhull@gmail.com](mailto:bradleyjhull@gmail.com)**

**[www.stmarkmburg.com](http://www.stmarkmburg.com)**

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***St Mark Lutheran Church Mechanicsburg***

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6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY  
FEBRUARY 16, 2025**



**GUESTS/VISITORS:**

*“Getting to Know You—Getting to Know All About You.” Please complete a “Welcome to St. Mark Church” card found in the pew and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. Thank you!*

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

This morning, during the 11:00 am worship service, we welcome Natalie and Andrew Bekelja as members of the Body of Christ and baptized members of St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mechanicsburg. Natalie and Andrew (who goes by Rocket) are grandchildren of Vikki Bekelja, who has been active in our congregation for almost two years and the children of Brett Bekelja who has been regularly attending our 11:00 am worship service since the summer. Please pray for Natalie and Andrew as they grow in their faith. Their older sisters, Izzy and Emily, are preparing to receive their first communion with us as well.

**INTRODUCTION TO TODAY**

*Blessings and curses abound on the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. We would do well to listen closely to whom the “blessed ones” and the “woe to” are directed and to find our place in the crowd among those who desire to touch Jesus. The risen Christ stands among us in the mystery of the holy supper with an invitation to live in him and offers power to heal us all.*

**UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

**Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546  
Tuesday, February 18, 2025**

Though he began his adult church life as a simple Augustinian monk, Luther challenged the abuses he saw in the church, and his work eventually led to the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s accomplishments included liturgical reform, translation of the Bible, and creation of the Small and Large Catechisms.

\*The asterisk in the margins of the bulletin indicates please stand as able.

## PRELUDE

*How Brightly Shines the Morning Star*

St. Mark Bell Choir

Traditional

## GATHERING: Psalm 118:24

P This is the day that the Lord has made;

C let us rejoice and be glad in it.

## \*BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin before God and one another.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination. Please kneel or be seated.*

P Merciful God,

C we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. 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.

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

\*GATHERING SONG

(Please bring items to the altar for New Hope.)

## In His Temple Now Behold Him

1 In his tem - ple now be - hold him, see the long - ex -  
2 In the arms of her who bore him, vir - gin pure, be -  
3 Je - sus, by your pre - sen - ta - tion, when they blessed you,  
4 Prince and au - thor of sal - va - tion, be your bound - less

pect - ed Lord; an - cient proph - ets had fore - told him,  
hold him lie, while his a - ged saints a - dore him,  
weak and poor, make us see your great sal - va - tion,  
love our theme! Je - sus, praise to you be giv - en

God has sent the prom - ised Word. Now to praise him,  
ere in per - fect faith they die. Al - le - lu - ia!  
seal us with your prom - ise sure; and pre - sent us,  
by the world you did re - deem, with the Fa - ther

his re - deem - ed shall break forth with one ac - cord.  
Al - le - lu - ia! Lo, the in - car - nate God Most High!  
in your glo - ry, to your Fa - ther, cleansed and pure.  
and the Spir - it God of maj - es - ty su - preme!

## \*GREETING

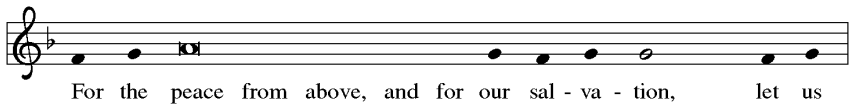
**P** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C** And also with you.

## \*KYRIE



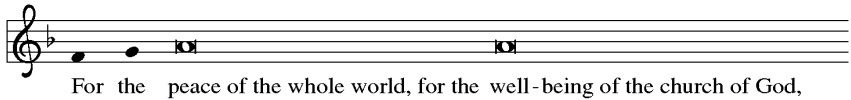
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer-cy.**



For the peace from above, and for our sal - va - tion, let us



pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



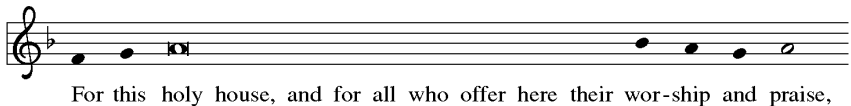
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



**A - men.**

# \*CANTICLE OF PRAISE



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



1 Lord God, heav-en - ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of



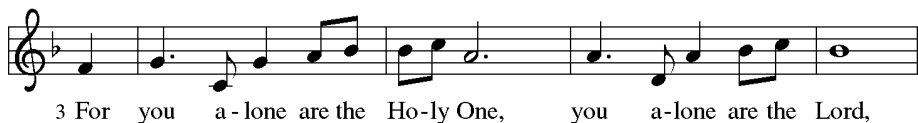
God, you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us; you are



seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



3 For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



you a-lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly



Spir-it, in the glo-ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.

### \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you,  
C and also with you.

P Let us pray.  
Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

### ANTHEM

*We are the Hands of Christ*

Words by J. Parker/  
Music by J. Raney

## FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 17:5-10

*These verses compose a poem that is part of a larger collection of wisdom sayings that contrast two ways of life. Life with God brings blessing; the power and vitality of God is active in our life. Life without God brings a curse, the power of death.*

R        A Reading from Jeremiah.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals  
and make mere flesh their strength,  
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> They shall be like a shrub in the desert,  
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in an uninhabited salt land.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is in the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,  
and its leaves shall stay green;  
in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

<sup>9</sup> The heart is devious above all else;  
it is perverse—  
who can understand it?

<sup>10</sup> I the Lord test the mind  
and search the heart,  
to give to all according to their ways,  
according to the fruit of their doings.

R        The word of the Lord.

C        **Thanks be to God.**



## PSALM: 1

*(Please sing the Psalm responsively. Choir the regular print; congregation the bold print.)*



<sup>1</sup> Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel <sup>|</sup> of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats <sup>|</sup> of the scornful!

<sup>2</sup> **Their delight is in the law <sup>|</sup> of the LORD, and they meditate on his law <sup>|</sup> day and night.**

<sup>3</sup> They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that <sup>|</sup> do not wither; everything they <sup>|</sup> do shall prosper.

<sup>4</sup> **It is not so <sup>|</sup> with the wicked; they are like chaff which the wind <sup>|</sup> blows away.**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when <sup>|</sup> judgment comes, nor the sinner in the council <sup>|</sup> of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> **For the LORD knows the way <sup>|</sup> of the righteous, but the way of the wick- <sup>|</sup> ed is doomed.**

## SECOND LESSON: 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:12-20

*For Paul, the resurrection of Christ is the basis for Christian hope. Because Christ has been raised, those who are in Christ know that they too will be raised to a new life beyond death.*

R A reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then

Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup> If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

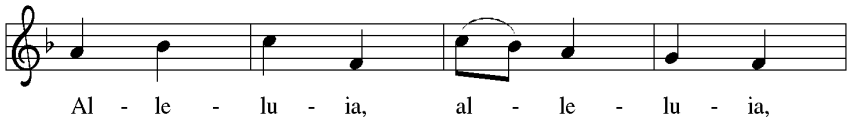
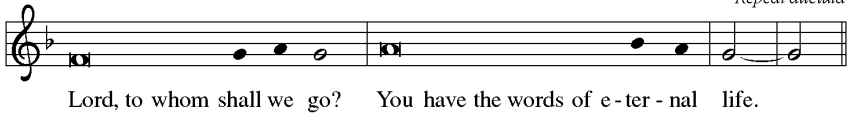
R The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

### \*ALLELUIA VERSE



*Repeat alleluia*



**\*GOSPEL: Luke 6:17-26**

*After choosing his twelve apostles, Jesus teaches a crowd of followers about the nature and demands of discipleship. He begins his great sermon with surprising statements about who is truly blessed in the eyes of God.*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>17</sup> [Jesus] came down with [the twelve] and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup> They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup> And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

<sup>20</sup> Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> “Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup> “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

<sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

**P** The Gospel of the Lord.

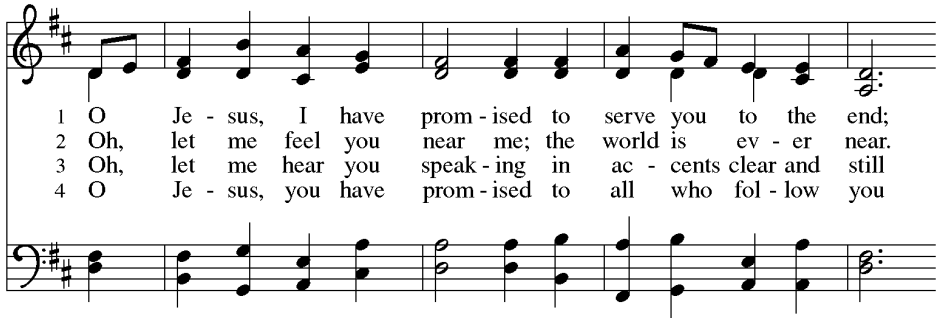
**C** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**CHILDREN’S SERMON**

**SERMON**

\*HYMN OF THE DAY

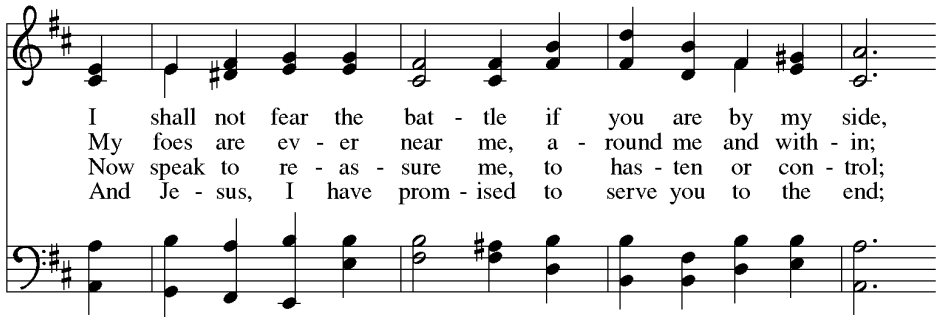
# O Jesus, I Have Promised



1 O Je - sus, I have prom - ised to serve you to the end;  
2 Oh, let me feel you near me; the world is ev - er near.  
3 Oh, let me hear you speak - ing in ac - cents clear and still  
4 O Je - sus, you have prom - ised to all who fol - low you



re - main for - ev - er near me, my mas - ter and my friend.  
I see the sights that daz - zle, the tempt - ing sounds I hear.  
a - bove the storms of pas - sion, the mur - murs of self - will.  
that where you are in glo - ry your ser - vant shall be too.



I shall not fear the bat - tle if you are by my side,  
My foes are ev - er near me, a - round me and with - in;  
Now speak to re - as - sure me, to has - ten or con - trol;  
And Je - sus, I have prom - ised to serve you to the end;



nor wan - der from the path - way if you will be my guide.  
but, Je - sus, then draw near - er to shield my soul from sin.  
now speak and make me lis - ten, O Guard - ian of my soul.  
oh, give me grace to fol - low, my mas - ter and my friend.

## \*APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\*

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

## \*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for  
the church, the world, and all of creation.

A God of grace,  
C hear our prayer.

P We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain  
hope that your promise is revealed among the people.

C Amen.

## OFFERING

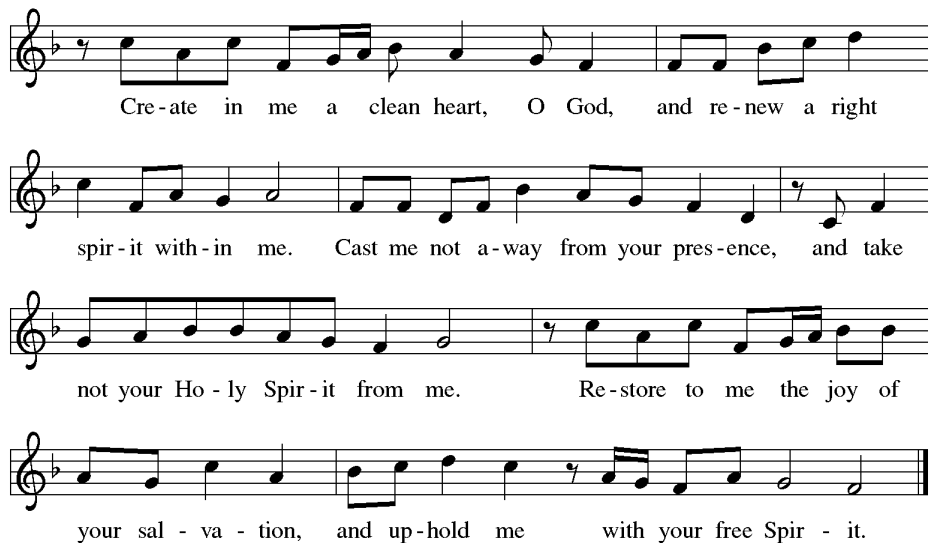
### OFFERTORY

*This Little Light of Mine*

Traditional Spiritual

## \*THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE

### Create in Me a Clean Heart *Offering Song*



Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take  
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re - store to me the joy of  
your sal - va - tion, and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923

Music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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## \*THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

**P** O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**C** Amen.

## **\*THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**C** 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.

## **\*BLESSING**

**P** May God the Father, ✝ the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless you  
with joy, anoint you with compassion, and send you in love.  
**C** Amen.

# \*CLOSING HYMN

## We Know That Christ Is Raised



1 We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.  
2 We share by wa - ter in his sav - ing death.  
3 The Fa - ther's splen - dor clothes the Son with life.  
4 A new cre - a - tion comes to life and grows



Em - braced by death, he broke its fear - ful hold,  
Re - born, we share with him an Eas - ter life,  
The Spir - it's fis - sion shakes the church of God.  
as Christ's new bod - y takes on flesh and blood.



and our de - spair he turned to blaz - ing joy.  
as liv - ing mem - bers of our Sav - ior Christ.  
Bap - tized, we live with God the Three in One.  
The u - ni - verse re - stored and whole will sing:



Hal - le - lu - jah!

Text: John B. Geyer, b. 1932

Music: ENGELBERG, Charles V. Stanford, 1852-1924

Text © John B. Geyer.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### \*DISMISSAL

A      Go in peace. Live in hope.  
C      Thanks be to God.

### \*POSTLUDE

*Count Your Blessings*

Oatman/Excell



In loving memory of Victor Miller on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday by his wife, Sara Jane Miller.

## TODAY'S ASSISTANTS

Ushers:	T.J. Larkin, Cindy Larkin
Assisting Minister:	Alma Gimbel
Lay Reader:	Sara Jane Miller
Acolyte:	Alma Gimbel
Altar Guild:	Sandy Brown, Connie Kuntz
Council Money Duty:	Jo Ann Novinger, Denise Hirn

## THIS WEEK AT ST. MARK

**Sunday, February 16**

8:30 am

9:45 am

9:45 am

11:00 am

1:00 pm

**6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

Blended Worship Svc.

Sunday Church School

Children's SS and Choir

Worship Svc.-Baptism

FUSE Meeting at St. Stephen

**Monday, February 17**

8:00 am

2:45 pm

7:00 pm

Garden Club

Violin Lessons

German Group

**Tuesday, February 18**

**Wednesday, February 19**

11:00 am

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

Bible Study

Bell Choir

Adult Choir

**Thursday, February 20**

**Friday, February 21**

3:45 pm

Violin Lessons

**Saturday, February 22**

**Sunday, February 23**

8:30 am

9:45 am

11:00 am

**7<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

Blended Worship Svc.

Annual Congregation Meeting in  
the Sanctuary

Worship Svc.

**LESSONS:**

**FIRST READING**

**PSALM**

**SECOND READING**

**GOSPEL**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2025**

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

## -ANNOUNCEMENTS-

### MONTHLY SUNDAYS TO BENEFIT NEW HOPE MINISTRIES

Please bring peanut butter and crackers to the altar during the singing of the first hymn. Here are the items for March, April, and May:

March 16

April 27

May 27

Canned Vegetables

Canned Fruit or Fruit Cups

Feminine Hygiene Products

### COLLEGE AND MILITARY CARE PACKAGES

The Youth and Family Ministry Committee would like to assemble and send care packages to our military personnel and college students. If you have a military person or student that you would like to receive a care package, please provide their name and mailing address to Michele Connor (via email to [crashdog68@aol.com](mailto:crashdog68@aol.com) or text to 717-579-4640) **no later than TODAY.**

### COLLEGE AND MILITARY CARE PACKAGE DONATIONS

Due to rising shipping costs, we are in need of contributions to cover postage. If you would like to help, please mark your donation for **Youth and Family Care Packages.**

We are also collecting items to include in the care packages. The following items are most needed:

- Hot chocolate packets, tea, or coffee
- Snack-sized candy bars, granola/cereal bars, gum
- Instant oatmeal, microwave popcorn, fruit snacks
- Pop-Tarts, pudding, applesauce, crackers, cookies, pretzels
- Post-It Notes, pencils, pens, highlighters
- Gift cards
- Kleenex, lip gloss
- Fun items like deck of cards or card games

Please feel free to donate any other items you think would be appropriate, as long as they fit in a shoe-box sized box. Donations can be placed in the **Upper Room** or given directly to **Michele Connor** no later than **TODAY.** Thank you for your support and generosity!

### FUSE MEETING

Attention Families! St. Stephen Church, New Kingstown, will be holding their **Fuse Meetings TODAY, at 1:00 pm.** A lunch meal will be served. Bring a side dish to share! This meeting is for kids of any age, 0-18, and a supportive adult in their life, in whatever form that is

(parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, older siblings, extended family, etc.). You don't need to attend St. Stephen Church to attend Fuse! Anyone is welcome! We will have a meal, do some activities and learn a lesson. So come Fuse with us!

### **ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING**

The Annual Congregation Meeting will be held next Sunday, **February 23**, immediately after worship service in the Sanctuary.

### **TACO TUESDAY EVENT**

Everyone is invited to St. Mark on **Tuesday, March 4, for TACO TUESDAY NIGHT**. The Fellowship Committee is hosting this fun event which will begin at 5:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. Please plan on attending and enjoying delicious tacos before the first day of Lent, March 5. And—bring a dessert to share. If you have any questions, please contact Phyllis Mihalich, Chair, Fellowship Committee at 717-697-0227.

### **ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES**

St. Mark will have Ash Wednesday services at **Noon and 7:00 pm on Wednesday, March 5**. Join us as we start the Lenten journey to the cross with Jesus.

### **LENTEN BREAD AND BROTH SUPPERS**

Come share a soup meal with your friends at St. Mark in our **Fellowship Hall at 5:30 pm every Wednesday evening in Lent (March 12-April 9)**. After each meal, we hope you join us in the sanctuary for an **interactive service at 6:45 pm** as we explore the Bible's "metanarrative." There will be separate special activities for kids during each service.

### **LADIES AND FRIENDS NIGHT OUT**

Reservations have been confirmed at **Theos Bar & Grille, 3315 Hartzdale Drive, Camp Hill, PA for Thursday, February 27, at 6:30 pm**. Come, bring a friend, and join in the fun, delicious food, and fellowship.

Here is a link to Theo's website: <https://www.theosgrille.net/>

### **MARCH FLOWER SPONSORS**

We are in need of flower sponsors for March 30. If you would like to sponsor one or both vases, please complete one of the forms located in the newsletter, bulletins, or entrances to St. Mark or contact Connie Kuntz at 717-503-5244. Thank you.

## SOUP SCHEDULE FOR BREAD AND BROTH MEALS:

March 12	WinGS
March 19	*Open Donations
March 26	Church Council
April 2	*Open Donations
April 9	Worship & Music (including choirs)

When your group is providing soup, keep in mind that we will need 6 to 7 pots of soup. Everyone will have a chance to sign up to bring in soup on \*Open Donation nights. Sign-up sheets will be posted at entrances to the church for soup donations and/or to assist with cleanup after the dinner. As a reminder, if you are coming for the meal and are not providing soup that week, please bring a salad, bread, or a dessert to share. To further assist us with cleanup, we ask that you pack up any of your leftovers at the end of the dinner. Or if you desire, take out containers will be available to share your leftovers with others. If you have any questions about the dinner, please contact Phyllis Mihalich, Fellowship Chair.



<b>February 16</b>	<b>FUSE Meeting at St. Stephen</b>
<b>February 23</b>	<b>Annual Congregation Meeting</b>
<b>February 27</b>	<b>Ladies &amp; Friends Night Out at Theo's</b>
<b>March 4</b>	<b>Taco Tuesday - All Invited</b>
<b>March 5</b>	<b>Lent begins - Ash Wednesday Services</b>
<b>March 12</b>	<b>Bread and Broth Begins</b>
<b>April 13</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>
<b>April 17</b>	<b>Maundy Thursday</b>
<b>April 20</b>	<b>Easter Sunrise Service</b>
<b>April 20</b>	<b>Resurrection of our Lord - Easter Day</b>

-WORD SEARCH-

# The Beatitudes

F F R I G H T E O U S N E S S Q P  
S H B E A T I T U D E S V M H T O  
Q J L W V F I N H E R I T O T F O  
O O Q R M M E R C I F U L U R I R  
O F I L L E D E K Q P Q H R H C I  
O F B H R P K T B L U L U N V O N  
K J P J Y E G H A I R R N E A M S  
I Q Y N J R L I Z N E E G R U F P  
N K U N D S X R K R I J E H B O I  
G H E A V E N S V S N O R J L R R  
D Q G Y G C X T T R H I U E E T I  
O D Q Z E U D A X S E C O I S E T  
M H M N G T A T F A A E H P S D G  
C T E F B E R E W A R D V B E D Z  
C B E N L D B Q V P T O T M D R E  
T K K J U S O N S O F G O D D M C  
R P E A C E M A K E R S U Z K K E

Poor in Spirit	Pure in Heart	Righteousness	Sons of God
Peacemakers	Persecuted	Beatitudes	Comforted
Merciful	Rejoice	Inherit	Kingdom
Blessed	Reward	Filled	Thirst
Hunger	Heaven	Mourn	Meek

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

### ABUNDANCE OF BLESSING

Poverty is not a virtue. It is a curse of our fallen world that will finally be undone when God's reign comes in its fullness. When hunger or homelessness is relieved in this life, it is a foretaste of that great day. Similarly, being hated, especially for the sake of Jesus, is not a goal for which we should strive. Why, then, does Jesus call those who are poor and reviled "blessed"?

The ancient prophet Jeremiah helps us understand Jesus' words. "Cursed are those who . . . make mere flesh their strength. . . . Blessed are those who trust in the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:5, 7). "Flesh" refers here not to our bodies but, rather, to human strength and capability, apart from God. In themselves, wealth, sufficient food, pleasures that bring laughter, and a positive reputation can be good. The problem comes when we base our security, hope, or sense of purpose on them. These good things then become idols. They become "flesh," displacing God from our hearts. Flesh cannot bear that burden, though, and will inevitably fail us. Jesus' words of blessing and woe are not a moral program or an ethical checklist, but shocking pronouncements meant to startle us out of our fixation on human capacities.

Jesus' beatitudes open us to the reality that Jeremiah declared: true blessing comes when we "trust in the LORD." We can risk human rejection, knowing that in baptism, we have been claimed eternally by God. If we are poor, God's word promises that we are treasured by the One who gave up everything for us. When we feel content with earthly food, at the Lord's table we discover that true delight comes from never-ending love present in simple bread and wine. When the song and prayer of the church give voice to lamentation, we find consolation and hope even in our tears.

Woe to us indeed if we allow ourselves to settle for mere human strength, when God's mercy and goodness are so much greater! In the word of the cross and the sacraments of grace, power comes forth from Jesus with blessing, strength, and joy forevermore.