



# Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

## January 2026 Newsletter

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." [Saint John 10:27]*



My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. John 10:27-28

*Dear Sheep of the Divine Shepherd:*

### **Saint John Chrysostom: A Voice of Golden Preaching**

"Chrysostom"—the "Golden-Mouthed" preacher—remains one of the Church's most beloved ancient voices. The churches observe his importance on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Born around AD 349 in Antioch, John Chrysostom served as a presbyter, bishop, preacher, reformer, and defender of the faith during a turbulent time in the Church's life. His sermons display a rare combination of pastoral warmth, clarity of exposition, doctrinal conviction, and deep concern for the Christian life.

For Lutherans, Chrysostom is more than a historical figure or eloquent speaker. The Lutheran Confessions cite him as a witness of the early, catholic Church who articulates doctrines that align with the Reformational recovery of the Gospel. His voice is one of the "fathers" we gladly receive, holding together biblical proclamation and pastoral care.

### **A Pastor Devoted to the Word**

Chrysostom is remembered above all as a preacher. His sermons—especially his Homilies on Matthew, on the Epistles of Paul, and on the life of the Church—show his confidence in the transforming power of Scripture.

He insisted that preaching must:

- *exposit the biblical text clearly,*
- *bring Law in its full seriousness,*
- *proclaim the comfort of God's grace, and*
- *shape the Christian's daily conduct.*

Luther and the Reformers shared this conviction. The Lutheran Confessions repeatedly highlight preaching as the means through which the Spirit works faith (Augsburg Confession V). Chrysostom's homilies embody this: faith does not arise from speculation or tradition but from the living Word of God proclaimed.

### **Witness to the Doctrine of Grace**

Though Chrysostom lived more than a thousand years before the Reformation, he articulated truths about grace that Lutherans readily embrace.

Chrysostom taught:

- that salvation is entirely the gift of God,
- that faith is created by the working of the Holy Spirit,
- that Christian obedience flows from gratitude, not merit.

His homilies often warn against reducing the Christian life to a ledger of earned righteousness. He famously said: "Faith saves us. But a life pleasing to God proves that faith is alive."

This distinction echoes what Lutherans call justification and sanctification—justification being God's unilateral act of declaring sinners righteous for Christ's sake, and sanctification being the Spirit's ongoing work in believers.

### **Chrysostom and the Means of Grace**

Chrysostom emphasized the centrality of the preached Word and the Sacrament of the Altar, viewing them as gifts through which Christ Himself is present and active among His people.

He wrote: "When you see the Lord sacrificed and laid upon the altar, and the priest standing over the sacrifice and praying...do you still say that you are among men and on earth?"

While Lutheran theology rejects later medieval misinterpretations of sacrifice, we affirm with Chrysostom:

- the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist;
- the ministry of the Word and Sacraments as God's chosen instruments;
- the holiness and seriousness of the Divine Service.

The Lutheran Confessions quote Chrysostom favorably, especially in support of the Eucharist's sacramental nature, not as a human work, but as the place where Christ gives Himself to His people (Apology XXIV.36; XXII.10).

### **A Voice for Christian Vocation and Mercy**

Chrysostom preached vigorously on Christian love for the poor, for the weak, and for one's neighbor. His sermons against neglect of the needy are among the most powerful in the early Church.

He insisted that:

- doctrine and life cannot be separated,
- faith produces visible acts of love,
- Christians bear Christ to their neighbors through mercy.

This aligns with the Lutheran teaching of vocation—that God calls every Christian into daily stations of life where faith becomes active in love (Gal. 5:6).

Chrysostom did not preach works as a ladder to heaven; rather, he saw mercy as the natural fruit of a heart renewed by grace.

### **Courage in Suffering and Confession**

John Chrysostom often found himself in conflict with corrupt political powers and ecclesiastical authorities. His fearless preaching led to his exile—twice—and ultimately to his death in AD 407.

His final words were:

“Glory be to God for all things.”

His life illustrates what the Lutheran Confessions affirm:

The cross marks the life of the Church.

Faithfulness to Christ sometimes carries the cost of suffering, but God’s grace sustains His people in every trial.

**Why Chrysostom Matters for Lutherans Today**

1. He reminds us that good preaching is clear, Christ-centered, and biblical.
2. He demonstrates that the ancient Church taught grace as gift, not merit.
3. He testifies to the centrality of Word and Sacrament.
4. He models Christian vocation through love of neighbor.
5. He encourages steadfast confession even under hardship.

Chrysostom is not a Lutheran, but he is a faithful father in the one holy Christian and apostolic Church, whose teaching and example enrich our confession of Christ.

As Luther once said of the Church Fathers: “We do not despise them, but we prefer Scripture above all.” Chrysostom himself would have agreed.

Chrysostom’s legacy is this: A preacher whose golden mouth proclaimed the golden Gospel.

May his witness encourage us to cherish the Word, delight in the Sacraments, live in mercy, and confess Christ boldly—until that day when the Church triumphant joins her eternal song before the throne of the Lamb.

Listen to Jesus,  
Pastor Zimmer

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# Christian Stewardship

## **Staying Out of the Ditches**



A ditch on either side of the road is still a ditch. The one on the left side of the road will damage your car as much as the one on the right side. Entering either ditch will prevent you from getting to your destination on time, if at all. Ditches come in all shapes and sizes, but there is one constant with them: you do not want to drive into them.

This reality of ditches is true on the wide, flat, fresh concrete of an interstate highway. Well-maintained medians and ditches are full of peril. It is also true of a winding asphalt or gravel backroad in the country. These might be even more dangerous because they do not readily reveal their depth, content and danger. It is true: a ditch on ANY road is still a ditch.

### **The ditch of anxiety**

This is especially true of the ditches on either side of the narrow road of faithful stewardship. On one side of the road is the hazardous ditch that is known as anxiety. This is prevalent in congregations, leadership groups and even among individual stewards. *The ditch of anxiety is filled with the fear that if the steward is faithful and is sacrificially living out their identity as a steward, they just might run out of what they need to support this body and life.*

*This idolatrous anxiety causes the steward to cling so tightly to what they have at the expense of faithful stewardship of the Gospel. This hampers faithful service within the congregation and inhibits faithful outreach into the community in which the congregation has been planted. It creates the wreckage of fear of lack, fear of missing out and fear of being less than we want to be. **This ditch crashes faithful stewardship.***

## **The ditch of apathy**

The ditch on the other side of the road is not any better. That one goes by the name of apathy. This is an ever-present issue in legacy congregations. The stewards in these congregations look around at their familiar settings and they do not like what they see. The pews that used to be full are mostly empty. The filled parking lots of holiday services stand vacant. The familiar faces grow older and grayer. The children that used to fill Sunday school rooms and parts in the Christmas programs went off to college, only never to return.

Neighborhoods changed demographics, socioeconomics and ethnicity. Rural and city congregations emptied as populations moved to greener pastures. In the face of all this, the steward feels helpless, hapless and hopeless. *The fear is that the remnant is powerless to make any changes, and this leads to a general feeling of apathy.*

The apathetic steward sighs, shrugs and goes careening into the dangerous ditch of apathy that leaves the *carnage of thinking that no serving, no caring and no generosity will ever be effective.* This paralyzes the mission of the church, the ministry of the congregation and the work of the individual steward. ***This ditch crashes faithful stewardship.***

## **Staying on the road**

*There is only one option. Jesus, the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, is the factor that keeps us on the narrow way. When the Holy Spirit is working through the Word of God taught in its truth and purity and the Holy Sacraments administered in accordance with their institution by Christ, the steward is guided along the winding road of life in this world with a clear vision of eternity in mind. The presence of Jesus in the lives of stewards breeds a faithfulness that keeps the steward out of both ditches, which can and will leave lives in wreckage.*

Daily devotions and the weekly Divine Service are where the Spirit does His work connecting the steward to Jesus. In fact, *the faithful steward finds that the most important thing worth stewarding is the Gospel.* The daily management of all of life and life's resources serve

the purpose of supporting and expanding the work of the Gospel in our families, our communities and our world. Here is where stewardship and mission go hand in hand.

The key to keeping stewards and congregations out of either ditch is keeping the stewards in Christ. Faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ is essential. Deepening connections to the Holy Scriptures are necessary. Weekly reception of the Lord's Supper is vital as well. If we are stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we are by virtue of our baptism, then the steward can never get enough Jesus in Word and Sacrament. *Faithful proclamation and reception of the Way, the Truth and the Life is the only way to keep stewards and their congregations out of the two equally-devastating ditches on either side of the narrow way.*

## **Called out of the ditches**

*The road has been paved by the Word of Jesus at the cross and empty tomb. **The faithful steward receives this treasure with joy knowing that it is FOR THEM, but not about them.*** This Gospel then moves them to be even more faithful with what the Lord entrusts to them for the sake of others. A ditch on either side of the narrow way is still a ditch. But Jesus calls us out of it. For His glory and the benefit of our neighbor!

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: [lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)

# January

## Week of January 4-10

Sun, Jan 4, 8:30 am Divine Service  
Sun, Jan 4, 9:40 am Fellowship  
Sun, Jan 4, 10:00 am Church Un-decorating

## Week of January 11-17

Sun, Jan 11, 8:30 am Divine Service  
Sun, Jan 11, 9:40 am Fellowship  
Sun, Jan 11, 10:00 am Bible Study

## Week of January 18-24

Sun, Jan 18, 8:30 am Divine Service  
Sun, Jan 18, 9:40 am Fellowship  
Sun, Jan 18, 10:00 am Bible Study

## Week of January 25-31

Sun, Jan 25, 8:30 am Divine Service  
Sun, Jan 25, 9:40 am Fellowship  
Sun, Jan 25, 10:00 am Bible Study

## Christmas Un-Decorating

Come and help us pack away the Christmas decorations after the service on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>. Many hands make light work.



## January Birthdays

06 Joan Fox (H)  
13 Karen Moritz  
13 Hannah Bingeheimer  
15 Paul Edgar  
18 Dawn Rousar  
20 Pat Gray  
31 Emily Zimmer



## January Baptismal Anniversaries

05 Teresa Pape  
20 Pat Gray



## The Sound of Music

A special *thank you* to those who musically enriched our worship services during Advent and Christmas. All your time and hard work is greatly appreciated!

## The Epiphany Season



As the Christmas season draws to a close, we enter the Epiphany season. The word Epiphany means “revelation” —God reveals how Jesus Christ is His Son, our Savior. The season begins with the Epiphany of Our Lord, a celebration of the visit of the Gentile wise men to the baby Jesus, who was born for all people. The season continues with Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River and culminates with Jesus’ transfiguration before three disciples. Come and be a part of this joyous season as God reveals to us His Son, His plan and purpose, and His salvation.

## The Baptism of Our Lord



We will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord in January. Though He had no sin of His own, Jesus undergoes baptism for us. He does this to fulfill all righteousness and to fill the water of Holy Baptism with Himself, His forgiveness, and His righteousness. So, rejoice in your baptism. For through that water combined with God’s Word, you are a child of God, clothed in Christ’s perfect righteousness, and a temple of the Holy Spirit!

## 2026 Offering Envelopes

The 2026 members’ new offering envelopes are in your church mailbox. Any questions please see Ron Ruisz.

Important, please note if you use the small brown envelopes in the pew you need to place your name or members envelope # to get credit for the yearly tax forms. With no info and cash, the money is put in the general fund. Thank you.

Your annual tax letter will be in your mail slot later this month. If you have any questions please see or call, Cindy Szoldatits, Financial Secretary.

## At Rest

**Melanie Witzke**, a sister in Christ, died on December 16 at the age of 91. She was given a church, Christian burial on December 26. Melanie shook of the bounds of earthly life in exchange for a new life with her Savior, Jesus Christ.

## New Member

Veronica Klelpczarek  
229 Charlotte Ln, Bolingbrook 60440  
630-390-5992  
Vklepcza@gmail.com

## Altar Guild Fund



If you are planning a future memorial donation, please consider giving it to Altar Guild to purchase additional frontals, banners, candles, altar cloths, etc to beautify the sanctuary.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the memorial fund at Christmas time.

## Altar Flowers



Thank you to everyone who donated flowers to decorate the altar and sanctuary in 2025. A special thank you to **Ruth** for arranging the beautiful bouquets.

The 2026 flower charts are posted. This is a wonderful way to help beautify God's house, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or remember a departed loved one. If you would like to contribute flowers to help beautify the sanctuary on a Lord's Day, please add your name to any open Sunday on the flower charts.

**Ruth Ogden** will do two altar bouquets for \$30. If you sign up, **Karen** will contact you to get your flower request, and a brief note to place in the worship bulletin. When the worship service is over, you are welcome to take your bouquets home

## Portals of Prayer

Now that 2026 is here, we are asking those who make use of the "Portals of Prayer" devotionals to pay this year's annual subscription rate of \$15.00. Simply submit this via the offering plate, earmarked Portals of Prayer. Blessings on your continued study of God's Word.

## Ladies Aid

We send all of you our wishes for a happy and healthy new year. Our Lord has kept Divine Shepherd in His care thus far and we trust that He will continue to do so.



Once again thank you for your Giving Tree and Food Drive contributions. These, along with funds from the Ladies Aid treasury and \$1,000 from Thrivent, were met with extreme gratitude. We helped 28 people (families, seniors, adults) and the food drive helped 5 families (18) and 3 seniors.

A special thank you to Lisa and Ed Cruz for once again heading up the 'giving tree' and for spear-heading the food drive. Thank you also to those who donated clothing for a local mission and to Ron Ruisz for taking the items to the mission.

All females are automatically members of the Ladies Aid. Please join us for the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, at 10:00 a.m. We will be planning activities for the coming months of the year. Suggestions for projects around our church building are welcome. Perhaps you have a suggestion for a social activity.

## Ladies Aid Money at Work



Listed below are just a few of the projects Ladies Aid has contributed to in 2025

- pastor appreciation/etc.
- the Giving Tree/food drive
- cleaning supplies
- Sunday treats
- paper goods/drinks/etc. for Sunday treats
- Alms Fund
- Seminary Student

These projects are made possible by your support of the Raise Right program. Thank you.

## Ladies Aid Officers

**President: Open**  
**Vice President: Lisa Cruz**  
**Secretary: Open**  
**Treasurer: Karen Moritz**

## Council Members

**Chairman: Ed Cruz**  
**Secretary: Laurrie Bingenheimer**  
**Treasurer: Ron Ruisz**  
**Financial Secretary: Cindy Szoldatits**  
**Vice Chairman: Open**  
**Board of Trustees: Kelly Stewart, Rick Otto**

## Altar Guild Members

**Denise Collins**  
**Karen Moritz**  
**Ruth Ogden**  
**Julie Zimmer**

If you can donate a couple of hours to set up communion, please see Ruth Ogden.

## Prayer Chain

Several members are part of a church prayer chain. If you (men or women) would like to join them in praying for our congregation's special needs, please contact Julie Zimmer (712-584-5301).

## Sunday Treats



Do you enjoy treats and fellowship after Sunday services? If so, please consider signing up on any given Sunday(s). Why not sign up with a friend? *Empty slots mean no treats.* To enable our diabetic members to enjoy these treats, please consider supplementing some of the "sugary goodies" with crackers and cheese and/or fruit. The 2026 signup sheet is posted on the Luther Hall bulletin board. Monetary donations are accepted to defray the cost of drinks and paper products, which are supplied by Ladies Aid.



# THRIVENT FINANCIAL®

Choice Dollars is a great way for eligible Thrivent members to show support for what matters most to them. If you have not given your Choice Dollars to Divine Shepherd, please do so. Thrivent members and Choice Dollars are an important source of support for the work the organization does. Why not do everything you can to make sure that you are getting the most out of your participation. A reminder that all 2025 Choice Dollars will have to be donated by **March 31** or they will be lost. These dollars are used to support various church/member's needs. Thanks.

## Our Cleaning Crew



A special thank you to our church's cleaning crew for all their hard work in helping to clean our church facilities on a regular basis. This volunteer cleaning crew works diligently to vacuum, dust, scrub, mop, tidy, empty trash, and prepare our facilities each weekend. If you can clean once a month, please see Kelly Stewart.

An additional thank you to all those volunteers who have helped to set up, take down, clean, serve on Sunday mornings and for special events. Your help and service are greatly appreciated!

## RaiseRight (Manna)

Shop with RaiseRight cards are available throughout the year for everyday expenses and gifts for any special occasion. Next order date is in **January 18**. Pre-purchased cards are available after Sunday services and forms are on the bookcase in Luther Hall

*Your Organization:*

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church – Manna

*Your Coordinator:* **Lisa Cruz**

630-636-6359 • [dslcmanna@yahoo.com](mailto:dslcmanna@yahoo.com)

<http://www.raiseright.com>

*Your Enrollment Code:*

B2LD2C7A55973

## Important Phone Numbers

**Church office:** 630-759-5300  
**Pastor Zimmer:** 583-880-9532  
**Head Elder:** 630-360-5573 (Scott Collins)  
**Prayer Chain:** 712-584-5301 (Julie Zimmer)  
**Newsletter info:** 630-759-3188 (Karen Moritz)  
*(items are due January 23)*

## Follow Us on Social Media

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with church happenings and events, find a variety of new and old congregational photos, and read inspirational posts and quotes from Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and various Christians throughout the centuries.

Facebook: [fb.me/DSLCLCbolingbrook](https://www.facebook.com/DSLCLCbolingbrook)

Twitter: @dslc60440

## Love Is God

Love is God shining through you.

Love is giving what you'd like to receive.

Love is taking the time, even when you do not have the time.

Love is listening with your heart.

Love is remembering.

Love is being there.

Love is believing in the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Love is the light of the world.

May Christ's love shine thru you now and always.

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

(Galatians 5:6)

(American Greetings)

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The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (Galatians 5:6) (American Greetings)

## God's Resolutions

We often resolve to improve the "little things" in life (time, weight, finances, etc.) that we completely forget about the "big things" that God would have us focus on! What are these big things? God has ten of them for you:

1. Fear, love, and trust in God above all things.
2. Call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.
3. Hold preaching and God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it.
4. Honor, serve and obey, love, and cherish your parents and other authorities.
5. Help and support your neighbor in every physical need.
6. Lead a sexually pure and decent life, and love and honor your spouse.
7. Help your neighbor to improve and protect his possessions and income.
8. Defend your neighbor, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.
9. Help and be of service to your neighbor in protecting his inheritance and house.
10. Urge your neighbor's spouse, workers, to be faithful to Him.

**Happy, healthy 2026**