

# MARK TIMES

## NEWS and NOTES for January 4, 2026

### THE WEEK AHEAD

Monday, January 5:	2:30PM	Fiber Arts at Westfield Manor
Tuesday, January 6:	10:00AM	Joint Epiphany Worship - <i>chapel</i>
Thursday, January 8:	4:30PM	Chancel choir
	6:00PM	Bell Choir
	6:00PM	Yoga – Parish Hall

### Epiphany Worship Tuesday

We join with our friends from St. George's for a special liturgy in celebration of the feast of the Epiphany on **Tuesday, January 6 at 10:00AM** in the **chapel**.



**THANK YOU, THANK YOU!** We wish to thank the St. Mark congregation for their generous Christmas gift for 2025. We all feel so blessed to serve this congregation in the different ways we are called. May all of us continue to be blessed and thrive in 2026! Thank you and Happy New Year!!

*~Evelyn Duncan, Carol Kugler, Becky Schnitzius Gary & Marilyn Huffman, and Randi Cardoza*

**THANK YOU** to all of you who contributed to the financial gift from the congregation and those who gave individual gifts! I remain deeply touched by your tremendous generosity. - *Pastor Brian*

### Diaper Drive for Epiphany!



As the Wise Men brought gifts to the baby Jesus, we will celebrate **Epiphany** with a **Diaper Drive** for little ones in need in our community.

**Our Epiphany Diaper Drive runs January 4 through January 18.** Items collected will be donated to The Pregnancy Care Center of Belleville, Fontabella Maternity Home in O'Fallon and other local organizations.

**Diapers sizes 3 through 7, and pullups sizes 2T through 6T, and disposable pants sizes 2T through 6T and 3T are most needed.** Open packages will be accepted. **Unopened packages of diaper wipes and diaper rash cream are also welcome.**

Realizing diapers are expensive, members are encouraged to join together on purchases or give monetary donations to Sherri Foppe or Ann Martens. Donations may also be made electronically at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-YT91/campaign/C-14EWR?access=tile> **direct** through January 18.

**St. Mark Offerings for 12/25 & 12/28:** General Fund: **\$11,868.66**; Christmas Flowers: \$10.10; DM Landscaping: \$101; Fiber Arts: \$101; Grounds/Property Maintenance: \$101; Staff Gift: \$20.20

## January Ladies Tea

Ladies of St George's and St Mark parishes are cordially invited to a special tea hosted by Kristie Ohlemeier and her committee. It will be held on Saturday, January 17 at 3:00PM in the Parish Hall. Come and enjoy fellowship and fun over a cup of tea and some good things to eat. Please sign up on the sheet on St. George's table in the narthex, or email Kristie at [kristie d ohle@yahoo.com](mailto:kristie_d_ohle@yahoo.com) or call/text 785-640-7452 or Sarah at [sbender8@hotmail.com](mailto:sbender8@hotmail.com). Ladies 16 years and over are welcome!

## A Word to Christmas from Bishop Busboom

*"It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9)*

God's people, Israel, were experiencing a spiritual crisis that caused them to question everything they thought they knew both about themselves and about God. Who were they now that their temple, the very center of their faith, lay in ruins? Who was God now that, instead of experiencing God's blessing, they were experiencing the full force of God's anger? Was there any future for them now that their very present seemed so tenuous and unsustainable?

Into the midst of Israel's spiritual angst, the prophet reminds God's people of all that God had already done for them. It was **God's** presence that had saved them. It was **God** who had redeemed them. It was **God** who had lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. It was **God** who had done all these things for them. Remember, Israel? Not you, but **God!** Only in remembering all that God had already done for them would Israel be motivated to repent, to turn back, to start living life the way God intended. Grace first, then repentance.

An image I often use to explain our Lutheran understanding of the gospel is the image of a down arrow. As God's people who confess that we are saved only by grace through faith in Christ, we Lutherans understand salvation to be a down arrow, that is, a gift that comes **down** to us from God. In contrast to so many other faith expressions, including among many who consider themselves to be Christian, in which salvation is the result of our human aspiring to somehow elevate ourselves **up** to the divine, we Lutheran Christians confess that salvation is the result of the divine coming **down** to us, in Jesus, crucified and risen.

It is this "coming down," this divine down arrow, that is the heart of Christmas. In the Christ-child, the Word-made-flesh, God comes **down** to us. It is this same Word-made-flesh that comes **down** to us in baptism, initiating with us a holy relationship as we are joined together with Christ's own death and resurrection. It is this same Word-made-flesh that comes **down** to us in, under, and with the bread and wine of Holy Communion, gifting us with God's forgiveness and a foretaste of eternal feast to come. In God's own **coming down** to us in Jesus, we are saved, we are redeemed, we are lifted up and carried forward into mission for the sake of the world.

Is not this the good news that our churches, our communities, our world needs to be reminded of this Christmas? In the midst of our own spiritual crises, both individually and corporately, do we not need to be reminded of all that God has already done for us? Do we not need to be reminded that our relationship with God is not dependent on our own going **up**, but rather on God's own coming **down**? This good news is the Word we, like the prophets before us, have been called to share this Christmas! This is the Word the world needs to hear more than any other.

As we celebrate Christmas, be reminded that God's **down arrow** has come into the world **for you...** and, **for all.**

In the grace of the One who came down, +Bishop Greg