

The Church in the Vineyard

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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January & February 2026

From the Pastor's Desk ...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Thou shall not kill.” (Exodus 20:13)

I assume you all know of this commandment, and I pray that you do your best to uphold it. Of course, the better translation of the original Hebrew language is “Thou shall not *murder*.” But, if you are following either one of these, then you are doing pretty well in my book!

However, the Bible is **not** the first place that this law was given to us. In fact, our first known recording of the rule appeared in the Code of Ur-Nammu (circa 2100 BCE). This set of laws is the world's **oldest known surviving code of law**, which was assembled in Mesopotamia for King Ur-Nammu. So, we've had a lot of time to get it right. A **lot** of time.

And, yet, here we are. On December 13, two innocent people were killed and nine others injured in a shooting at Brown University in Rhode Island. The very next day, we witnessed the murder of at least 15 innocent people on a beach in Australia. And on that same day, film producer Rob Reiner and his wife were stabbed to death.

As Christians, it is our calling to make this stop. We are called to witness to the words of Jesus when He said, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” and, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Notice, Jesus offered no exceptions: Thou shall not kill. Period. We shall not kill simply because someone worships in a different way. We shall not kill because they seem to have too much power (That's *our* fault, not theirs.) And we surely don't kill just because someone does something that we don't appreciate. Thou shall not kill. It's just that simple.

So, spread the word, my friends.
All throughout the new year!

Pastor Matt



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REMINDER: As motioned and approved by Church Council at their meeting on 8-17-2021, 100% of offerings given in the special giving envelopes [Ash Wednesday, six Wednesdays in Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas] will be placed toward Benevolence to help our congregation meet our apportioned benevolence amount of \$12,500.00 to the NWPA Synod of the ELCA each year.



Scripture Readings for January and February 2026



Epiphany Sunday – January 4, 2026

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

The feast of Epiphany (manifestation) concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's Glory revealed in the person Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, the glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the Light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.

Baptism of Our Lord – January 11, 2026

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism, we too are washed by the Word, appointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 18, 2026

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Today's gospel opens with further reflection of Jesus' baptism. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one anointed by the Spirit. In the liturgy, we come and see Christ revealed among us in word and meal. We go forth to invite others to come and worship the Holy One and to receive the gifts of grace and peace made known among us.

Third Sunday after Epiphany – January 25, 2026

Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be "caught" in the net of God's grace and mercy.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – February 1, 2026

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism, we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – February 8, 2026

Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]; Psalm 112:1-9 [10]; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]; Matthew 5:13-20

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism, we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Scripture Readings for January and February 2026 continued

Transfiguration of Our Lord – February 15, 2026

Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

Today's festival is a bridge between the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle that comes to a close today and the Lent-Easter cycle that begins in several days. On a high mountain, Jesus is revealed as God's beloved Son, echoing the words at this baptism. This vision of glory sustains us as Jesus faces his impending death in Jerusalem. We turn this week to Ash Wednesday and our yearly baptismal journey from Lent to Easter. Some churches put aside the alleluia at the conclusion of today's liturgy. This word of joy will be omitted during the penitential season of Lent and will be sung again at Easter.

Ash Wednesday – February 18, 2026

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

On Ash Wednesday, we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray to God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that "now is the day of salvation." Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

First Sunday in Lent – February 25, 2026

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church, Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

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Ash Wednesday Service

Come prepare your heart for the Lenten season by worshipping with us at our Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Corporate Confession and Forgiveness, the Imposition of Ashes and the Sacrament of Holy Communion will be offered this evening.



A Prayer for the Lenten Season

Heavenly Father, since the Lenten season is a time to practice the Lenten disciplines of prayer, study and fasting, I ask you to give me the strength and the determination to live these disciplines. There are so many times when I am weak and so many times when other things get in the way of doing what I wish to do. Let your guiding light shine into my life that I may be faithful. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



Happening at St. Peter's in January and February

Epiphany Service – As the Christmas season ends and we enter into the season of Epiphany, the season of Light, we invite you, your family and friends to join us on Sunday, January 4, 2026 at our morning worship service at 10:30 a.m. as we celebrate the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ!

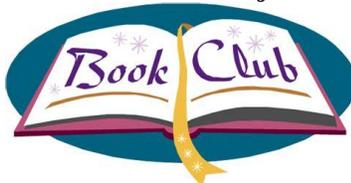


St. Peter's Daytime Book Club

We will be meeting on Friday, January 9th at the Bean in downtown North East to discuss the book Medicine River by Mary Annette Pember.

9:30-10:00 Social Time
10:00-11:00 is Book Discussion.

All are welcome to join us!



North East Food Pantry

During the month of January and February, we will be collecting cans of peaches, pears and mixed fruit for the NE Food Pantry.

St. Peter's is scheduled to serve in the month of March. If you wish to help, please speak with Dennis Groce or Pastor Matt or simply sign-up on the sheet in the narthex.

Thank you for all you do to help your neighbors in need!

You are invited to attend the Erie Lutheran Conference **Epiphany Service on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, 7:00 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, 5414 E. Lake Road.**

Service of Holy Communion followed by Burning of the Christmas Greens, with cocoa and cookies afterward. Our guest preacher will be the Very Rev. Dr. John P. Downey, Vicar, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Fairview.

All are welcome –

Please dress warmly

for the burning of the greens.



Congregational Meeting, Phase II – Sunday, February 1, 2026

Mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend our annual Congregational Meeting, Phase II following worship. A Dessert Buffet will be served prior to the meeting in the Fellowship Hall.

THANK YOU'S

Thank you to **Stephanie Dennison** for serving on Church Council for the past six years – all of your hard work has been much appreciated.

Thank you to **Mae Dudick, Marcia Groce** and **Harriet Partch** for serving another term on Council and your commitment to St. Peter's.

Thank you to **Don Partch, Scott Torrance** and **Paul Witosky** for being willing to serve and carry out the mission of St. Peter's in 2026 and beyond.

One more member is needed to serve to complete Church Council. If you are considering it, please speak with Pastor Matt.

Please join us for worship on **Sunday, February 15, 2025 at 10:30 am** as we welcome Bishop Kristen Papson, NWPA Synod, to St. Peter's Church.

Following the service, we will have a reception in her honor in our Fellowship Hall.



Milestones on the Journey of Life

BIRTHDAY WISHES TO:

Jan 3 Abby Foster	Feb 7 Donald Hutchinson
Jan 6 Ronda Page	Feb 9 Megan Desin
Jan 11 bDanielle LeRocque	Feb 10 Stephanie Dennison
Jan 12 Flynn Carver	Feb 10 Jean Stetson
Jan 12 Dawn Page	Feb 12 Jazmyn Byers
Jan 12 Corey Weigle	Feb 15 Margaret Luke
Jan 16 Patrick Fuller	Feb 15 Emma Penrod
Jan 17 Jeremy Cook	Feb 16 William Lewis
Jan 20 Paige Newara	Feb 17 Keith Sayers
Jan 22 Janine Cook	Feb 19 Sue Reed
Jan 26 Ray Wakley	Feb 20 Chad Fuller
Jan 28 Heather Pursell	Feb 21 Eric Penrod
Jan 28 Alivia Stevens	Feb 24 John Nielsen
Jan 30 Kira Lichtenfeld	Feb 25 Sasha Pratt
Feb 1 Maya Hutchinson	Feb 25 Michael Voorhis
Feb 1 Scott Mundaniohl	
Feb 1 Timothy Mundaniohl	
Feb 5 Alexander Burke	
Feb 5 Lucy Hutchinson	
Feb 6 Evan Davis	
Feb 6 Debra Maines	
Feb 7 Steven Batten	
Feb 7 Camille Greco	



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Dan and Sue Reed
on January 15th



We are again reminded that here we have no abiding city.
In His infinite mercy, the LORD has graciously received into His nearer presence:

Charles L. Valone
Born: January 19, 1929 Died: August 10, 2025

Annie “Lena” Signorello Newara
Born: February 5, 1927 Died: October 28, 2025

Thomas Dennison
Born: September 19, 1954 Died: November 2, 2025

Paul Richards “Rick” Fuller
Born: February 7, 1944 Died: November 15, 2025

Kathleen “Kathy” Ann Johnston
Born: March 25, 1947 Died: November 19, 2025



LORD, teach us to consider our own departure that when the hour is come, we may be prepared for a blessed entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom.



LEARN ABOUT NATURE TO CARE FOR NATURE

In winter it can be easy to stay inside where it is warm and avoid putting on all the clothes it takes to be comfortable outdoors. However, winter is a great time to learn more about many of the species that share our neighborhoods. Teaching ourselves and our family members about God’s creation is the first step to being good stewards.

As we learn to identify different species of animals or plants, the way our brain stores that knowledge changes. That change leads to an appreciation and, eventually, to caring about that species. It is the things that we care about that we are willing to take action to preserve. Thus, our stewardship begins with knowledge.

Thankfully, there are many tools available that can help us learn to identify the species around us. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology produced the Merlin Bird ID App (<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>) which allows users to identify birds by sight or sound. (Having a way to identify birds by sound alone, is a wonderful tool!) Apps are also available for identifying animal tracks. Cornell University has also released two keys for identifying trees; one for the winter and one for the summer: <http://bhort.bh.cornell.edu/tree/keys.htm>.

If books are more useful for you, the Nature Study Guild has a series of pocket field guides that cover flowers, trees, ferns, berries, animal tracks, and weeds. Most can be purchased for about \$5.

Bringing the wildlife to you can also be very rewarding. Putting a birdfeeder within view of a window can bring the birds close enough to identify them and learn about their habits and preferences. To be a responsible bird feeder follow the guidelines of Project FeederWatch: <https://feederwatch.org/learn/feeding-birds/>

In the words of Baba Dioum, a Senegalese forestry engineer, "*In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.*"

The Green Team’s purpose is to “raise awareness of and advocate for the care of creation.” Our mission is to support and encourage creation care ministries, raise awareness, model creation care advocacy consistent with ELCA teachings in our faith communities and public life.

Like and follow us on Facebook: [Northwestern PA Synod Green Team – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#). Contact us at: nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com

January 2026



Worship Aides for January and February 2026

*If there is a conflict on your given date, it is your responsibility to find someone to substitute for you.
Please notify the office by Wednesday before the Sunday of the change. Thank you!*

	Sunday January 4	Sunday January 11	Sunday January 18	Sunday January 25
Assistant Minister	Cathi N.	Jeremy P.	Marcia G.	Paul W.
Crucifer	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Acolyte	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Lector	Cathi N.	Jeremy P.	Dennis G.	Gerda W.
Usher(s)	Anthony N.	Paul W.	Dennis G.	Harriet P.
Altar Care	Stephanie D.	Stephanie D.	Stephanie D.	Stephanie D.
Counters	Stephanie D. Cathi N.	Leslee G. Scott T.	Dennis G. Frank G.	Don P. Scott T.

	Sunday February 1	Sunday February 8	Sunday February 15	Ash Wednesday February 18	Sunday February 22
Assistant Minister	Cathi N.	Paul W.	Marcia G.	Stephanie D.	Jeremy P.
Crucifer	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Acolyte	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Lector	Cathi N..	Gerda W.	Dennis G.	Stephanie D.	Jeremy P.
Usher(s)	Anthony N.	Marcia G.	Dennis G.	XXX	Paul W.
Altar Care	Marcia G.	Marcia G.	Marcia G.	Marcia G.	Marcia G.
Counters	Frank G. Cathi N.	Don P. Paul W.	Dennis G. Scott T.	Stephanie D. Cathi N.	Scott T. Paul W.

January and February At-A-Glance
Youth Sunday School 9:00 – 10:15 am (1st and 3rd Sundays)
Sunday Adult Bible Study 9:15 am
Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 am

- Jan 1 New Year's Day
- Jan 4 Epiphany Sunday
- Jan 6 **EPIPHANY**
- Jan 6 Property meets at 7:00 pm
- Jan 14 Stewardship meets at 11:00 am
- Jan 19 **MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY** – Office is closed.
- Jan 20 Church Council meets at 6:30 pm
- Feb 1 Congregational Meeting, Phase II after worship
- Feb 3 Property meets at 7:00 pm
- Feb 11 Stewardship meets at 11:00 am
- Feb 11 Golfers & Grubbers at Erie Otters Game at 7:00p
- Feb 14 **VALENTINE'S DAY**
- Feb 16 **PRESIDENT'S DAY**
- Feb 16 Articles are due for the March/April Digest
- Feb 17 **SHROVE TUESDAY**
- Feb 17 Church Council meets at 6:30 pm
- Feb 18 **ASH WEDNESDAY**
- Feb 18 Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 pm
- Feb 25 Wednesday Lenten service at 7:00 pm

COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2026

Pastor Matthew Dennison
Mae Dudick
Marcia Groce
Harriet Partch
Don Partch
Crystal Pratt
Scott Torrance
Shirley Torrance
Paul Witosky

**OFFICERS OF THE
 CONGREGATION FOR 2025**

President – Pr. Matthew Dennison
Vice President – Marcia Groce
Secretary – Shirley Torrance
Treasurer – Scott Torrance Sr.
**Council Financial Secretary –
 Stephanie Dennison**

Officers for 2026 in the next issue.

OFFICE HOURS:

**Monday-Wednesday 9:00 am -
 2:00pm**

Thursday as needed

Telephone: 814-725-1840

PASTOR'S HOURS:

**Tuesday-Thursday 9:00 am-
 5:00pm**

**Pastor's Phone: 814-725-1840 ext.
 5**

Email:

stpetersnortheast@gmail.com

Website:

www.stpetersnortheast.org

STAFF OF ST. PETER'S:

Rev. Matthew E. Dennison

Parish Administrator –

Cathi Newara

Organist -- Ellsworth Textor

Sunday School Director –

Cathi Newara



WE'RE ON THE WEB !!!

Visit us at: www.stpetersnortheast.org

or on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Peters-Lutheran-Church-of-North-East/100093705875362/>