



# Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

1187 C.R. 128 & U.S. Rt. 20

Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

93.1FM

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www.faithfremont.org

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## Baptism of Our Lord

January 11, 2026

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Setting 3 with Holy Communion

\*Congregation please stand as you are able.

### Introduction

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, anointed 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.

### Prelude:

*Joseph, Dear Joseph*

**C. Davis**

### Welcome & Announcements: Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

### GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

### \*Invitation to Worship

**P:** When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back  
with their flocks, then the work of Christmas begins:

### **C: To find the lost**

**To heal those broken in spirit**

**To feed the hungry**

**To release the oppressed**

**To rebuild the nations**

**To bring peace among all peoples**

**To make a little music with our hearts.**

P: And to radiate the Light of Christ every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say.

**C: Then the work of Christmas begins.**

P: Rise up in splendor, your light has come. The glory of the Lord shines upon you.

**C: Let the work of Christmas begin, and let it begin with us.**

*(Howard Thurman, author)*

P: May the Lord be with us.

**C: Amen.**

**\*Gathering Song:**

***Do You Hear What I Hear***

Said the night wind to the little lamb, do you see what I see?  
Way up in the sky, little lamb. Do you see what I see?  
A star, a star, dancing in the night, with a tail as big as a kite,  
With a tail as big as a kite.

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy, do you hear what I hear?  
Ringing thru the sky, shepherd boy. Do you hear what I hear?  
A song, a song, high above the tree with a voice as big as the sea,  
With a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king, do you know what I know?  
In your palace warm, mighty king, do you know what I know?  
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold; Let us bring Him silver and gold,  
Let us bring him silver and gold.

Said the king to the people everywhere, listen to what I say  
Pray for peace, people everywhere, listen to what I say!  
The Child, the Child sleeping in the night; He will bring us goodness  
and light, He will bring us goodness and light.

**\*Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God,  
the Creator of heaven and earth,  
the Word who spoke life into being,  
the Wind stirring the waters.

**C: Amen.**

P: Let us turn in confession to the one who knows us completely.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P: Mighty God, lover of justice,

**C: you call us to life in community,  
but we have served our own interests  
at the expense of our neighbors.  
We have sown deceit where honesty was needed.  
We say the right words,  
but our hearts are far from you.  
Turn us to seek your face.  
Knit us together and give us the mind of Christ,  
that we may do justice, love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God.  
Amen.**

P: The former things have passed away,  
and new things God now declares:  
Like a spring of water that never fails,  
God covers you in the righteousness of Christ,  
and forgives your sin in ✝ Jesus' name.  
May the Spirit give you strength to live for others,  
and bless you with the gift of peace.

**C: Amen.**

\*Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray.

**C: O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him  
your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all  
who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your  
daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, through  
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

### First Reading:

### Isaiah 42:1-9

*God's servant is endowed with God's spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever prevent the fulfilling of the servant's task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the servant's new assignment is to bring light to the nations.*

R: A reading from Isaiah, the 42<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;

I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup> He will not cry out or lift up his voice  
or make it heard in the street;

<sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

<sup>4</sup> He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth,  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the LORD,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup> I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations,

<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

<sup>8</sup> I am the LORD; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.

<sup>9</sup> See, the former things have come to pass,

and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Responsive Reading:**

**Psalms 29**

- <sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- <sup>2</sup> **Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;  
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**
- <sup>3</sup> The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;  
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.
- <sup>4</sup> **The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;  
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.**
- <sup>5</sup> The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;  
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
- <sup>6</sup> **the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**
- <sup>7</sup> The voice of the LORD  
bursts forth in lightning flashes.
- <sup>8</sup> **The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**
- <sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the  
forests bare. And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"
- <sup>10</sup> **The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;  
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.**
- <sup>11</sup> O LORD, give strength to your people;  
give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

**Second Reading:**

**Acts 10:34-43**

*Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God's inclusive forgiveness in Jesus' name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter's preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

**R:** A reading from Acts, the tenth chapter.

- <sup>34</sup> Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every people anyone

who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*Gospel Acclamation**      *Lord, I Lift Your Name on High*  
**Lord, I lift Your name on high; Lord, I love to sing Your praises.**  
**I'm so glad You're in my life; I'm so glad You came to save us.**  
**Lord, I lift Your name on high.**

**\*Gospel** **Matthew 3:13-17**

*Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, touched by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God's child.*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 3rd chapter.

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

P: <sup>13</sup> Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

# Children's Sermon

## Sermon

### \*Sermon Hymn:

*When Jesus Came to Jordan*

ELW 305

### \*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

**R:** As God's beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

*A brief silence.*

**R:** Steadfast God, give courage to your servant church. Heal our divisions and unite us in mission. Uphold our lay leaders, missionaries, pastors, and bishops, and all who proclaim hope in a broken world. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

**R:** Restoring God, cleanse the life-giving waters of rivers, seas, and springs. Create in us an urgent desire to preserve the beauty and bounty of your good creation. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Righteous God, you guide the nations. Reconcile warring enemies and end cycles of violent retribution. Defend the rights of prisoners, detainees, and all who flee from persecution. Sustain international aid workers and peacemakers. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Compassionate God, you care for all in distress. Provide safety and support for those seeking asylum or in need of shelter. Be near to the dying, and comfort all who are grieving or ill, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for 10 seconds for people to be named)*. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Loving God, awaken the gifts of the Spirit in this congregation, that we may serve Christ by loving one another, our neighbors, and our enemies. We pray for travelers and those who are homebound. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Promising God, in baptism we die and rise with Christ. We give thanks for those who have gone before us, and we trust that we will join them in your everlasting peace. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

### **MEAL**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

### **\*Sharing of the Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

**(10:30) Senior Choir:** *Come to the Water* J. Foley, arr. L. Hasseler

### **\*Offertory** *We Are an Offering*

**We lift our voices, we lift our hands,  
we lift our lives up to you, we are an offering.**

**Lord, use our voices, Lord, use our hands, Lord, use our lives,  
they are Yours, we are an offering, we are an offering.**



### **\*Offering Prayer**

P: God of majesty,  
no eye has seen, no ear has heard  
what you have prepared for those who love you,  
yet in this meal you reveal the wideness of your mercy.  
Use what we have gathered  
to feed us with the reign of God come near,  
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **\*The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.  
In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh  
you have opened the eyes of faith  
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,  
that, beholding the God made visible,  
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

### **\*Thanksgiving at the Table**

P: Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.

P: In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.**

P: With this bread and cup  
we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.  
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.  
We look with hope for his coming.

**C: Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us. Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people.  
Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**C: Come, Holy Spirit.**

P: All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

### **\*Lord's Prayer**

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.**

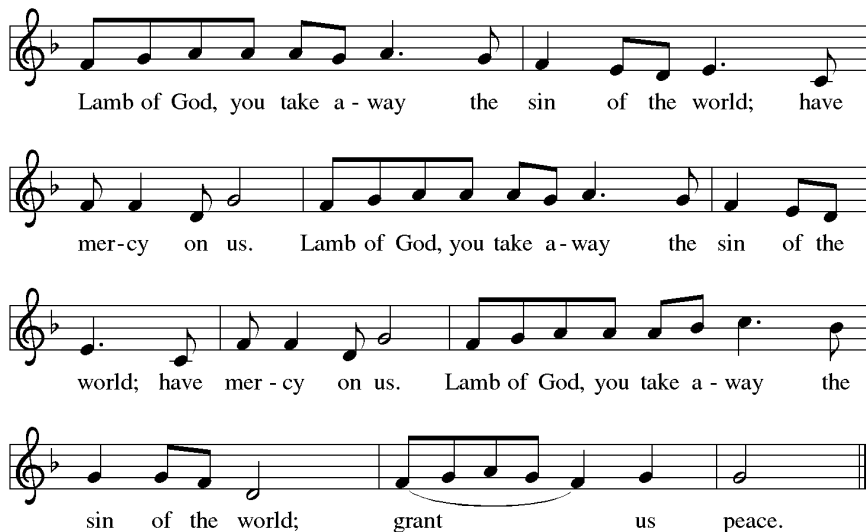
**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **\*Invitation to Communion**

P: Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Come to the table; taste and see.

### **Lamb of God**



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace.

## **Distribution of Communion**

*Communion will be continuous. The ushers will invite you to come forward by the center aisle. You will be handed the bread with the words, "The Body of Christ given for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Step to the Communion Assistant and take the cup. They will speak the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!" Empty cups may be placed in the basket as you return to your seat by the side aisle.*

*If you prefer gluten- free bread, please let the Pastor know. If you prefer grape juice, please let the Communion Assistant know. If you prefer not to receive or have children who have not yet received, please let the Pastor know and he will offer a blessing.*

### **(8:00) Piano & Flute Duet:**

*Comes the Winter*

**James Michael Stevens**

### **(10:30) Communion Hymn:**

*Little Drummer Boy*

**Come, they told me, pa rum pum pum pum  
A newborn King to see, pa rum pum pum pum  
Our finest gifts we bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
To lay before the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,  
So to honor Him, pa rum pum pum pum, When we come.**

**Little Baby, pa rum pum pum pum  
I am a poor boy, too, pa rum pum pum pum  
I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,  
Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum, On my drum?**

**Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum  
The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,  
Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum  
Me and my drum.**

**\*Post Communion Blessing**

P: May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

**\*Prayer After Communion**

P: Radiant God,  
we have seen your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.  
In the sacrament of his body and blood  
you have drawn us to your heart.  
Send us from this table with delight,  
that our lives may reflect the beauty of your love,  
and bear witness to all we have seen and heard,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**\*Blessing**

P: May the triune God,  
who has put a new song in your mouth  
and tuned your heart for praise  
✠ bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

**\*Sending Song:**                    *Let There Be Peace on Earth*

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on earth the peace that was meant to be.  
With God as our Father, brothers all are we.  
Let me walk with my brother in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.  
With every step I take let this be my solemn vow:  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.  
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

### **\*Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Do justice. Love mercy.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

### **\*Postlude:**

***Let There Be Peace on Earth***

**Kurt Kaiser**

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**WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!** There are many good reasons to come to church, but the best one is to worship and thank God for His amazing love — shown through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** is scheduled for Sunday, January 25, 2026 in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 9:15 a.m. Please plan to attend. Thank you.



**BELL RINGERS NEEDED** – The Bell Choir is in need of a few extra members at this time. Please consider adding yourself to create some inspirational music of praise. Rehearsals are held on Wednesdays from 6:30 – 7:20 p.m. (Thursdays during the Lenten season) in the Fellowship Hall. You may contact Darla Brown at 419-680-6717 for more information. Thank you!

**GIVING STATEMENTS** for 2025 are on the table in the Narthex for you.

**2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES** are available in the narthex. If you have not picked yours up yet, please do so.

**CHRIST CARE NEWS** - Beginning Saturday, February 7 at 9:15 a.m. our Christ Care group will gather to begin a study on the Gospel of Luke. Great news is woven throughout this gospel that perfection is not a prerequisite to a deep and personal relationship with Jesus. Luke shares with us the extent to which Jesus is so very fond of ragamuffins in need of a safe place to lean into and linger. Come join us as Jesus embraces the outcasts, outsiders and overlooked. See Noelle Leutenegger or give her a call at 419-307-1063. We look forward to seeing you and growing in God's amazing love for each one of us.

**UPDATED CHURCH TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES AND THE F.L.C.W. PROGRAM BOOKLETS** for 2026 are also available in the narthex for you.

**REMINDER...** *When Sandusky County is under a Level 3 Snow Advisory the church will be closed. This includes Sunday services as well as all weekday events, meetings and activities for that day. If we are under a level 1 or 2 snow emergency, the church will be open and if it's on a day of worship, we will have worship.*

## **PRAYING DAILY**



Praying for...

**For healing and hope:** Joan Bolen, Mary Ann Diekman, Denny Fahle, Millie Fetterman, Pat Forsyth, Della Humbarger, Denny Krumnow, Bill Leutenegger, Dean May, Stan Moyer, Nancy Mylander, Gary Overmyer, Sandie Reed, Ken & Gloria Root, Letty Rusch, Bob Schneider, Janet Tressler, Linda Woessner. Jackie Mowry, Eric Paul, Kathy Spanfeller, Teri Titkemeier.

**For the Family of:** William Seibert

**For our Bishops:** Bishop Christian Ndossa, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and NWOS Bishop Daniel Beaudoin and Staff

**For our partner congregation in Bumila, Tanzania**

**And its pastor:** Pastor Peter Magasi

**PRAY FOR OUR**  
  
**MILITARY**

**For our Military:** Noah Egbert, Troy Halfhill, Jade Kayser, Daniel Linder, Tony Rozzi, Christopher Templeton, & Joshua Tooman.





**USHERS NEEDED ON SUNDAY MORNINGS** – I would like to appeal to those of you interested in being ushers to please sign up on the clipboards in the coat room area. Thank you very much! Mike Fought, Deacon.

### **ASSISTING TODAY**

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Pianist:** Becky Fox

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown    **Flautist:** Marilyn Ring

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** Jim Seibert Family    Lillian Harder

**Lector:** Jackson Fought    Rachel Wasserman

**Acolyte:** Karly Paeth    Rachel Wasserman

**Communion:** J. Seibert/A. Gazdecki    L. Krynock & M. Garlock

**Counters:** Becky Dymond\* & Niki Wasserman

**Fellowship Time Host:**

**Altar Guild:** Brenda Tooman & Kim Smith

**Ushers:** (8:00) Toomans    (10:30) Matthew Garlock

### **ASSISTING NEXT WEEK**

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Organist:** Darla Brown

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** Karly Paeth & Family    Marg Schwartz

**Lector:** Greyson Tooman    Shelby Thornhill

**Acolyte:** Greyson Tooman

**Communion:** K. Paeth/C. Paeth    R. Koch & R. Brown

**Counters:** Dave Kocsis\* & Scott Miarer

**Fellowship Time Host:**

**Altar Guild:** Brenda Tooman & Kim Smith

**Ushers:** (8:00) Toomans

## **FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – Jan. 11 to Jan. 18**

### **Sunday**

Jan. 11-----8 & 10:30 a.m.    Worship with Holy Communion  
                                  9:15 a.m.    Sunday School & Fellowship Time

### **Monday**

Jan. 12-----8 a.m.    Men's Group in Fellowship Hall  
                                  10 a.m.    Valley View – Tea Time with God  
                                  11:30 a.m.    FLCW Visitation at Bob Evans  
                                  7:30 p.m.    Dartball – Away vs. Zion

### **Tuesday**

Jan. 13-----

### **Wednesday**

Jan. 14-----6:30 p.m.    Bell Choir  
                                  7:30 p.m.    Praise Choir  
                                  7:30 p.m.    Senior Choir

### **Thursday**

Jan. 15-----9-3 p.m.    Fellowship & Sew Day  
                                  3 p.m.    Christ Care

### **Friday**

Jan. 16-----

### **Saturday**

Jan. 17-----

### **Sunday      NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**

Jan. 18-----8 & 10:30 a.m.    Worship with Holy Communion  
                                  9:15 a.m.    Sunday School & Fellowship Time

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026: ATTENDANCE: 126 – OFFERING: \$4,036.77

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## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**January 11, 2026**  
**BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

### **Resistance Movements**

Herod plotting to kill. John at the riverbank. Peter in Jerusalem. Judas at the table. Thomas behind closed doors. Nicodemus in the night. Family at home. Crowds in the streets. Quite a collection, but merely a sampling of a much longer list. There are plenty in the pages of the scriptures, and in the circles of our daily rounds: they—we—who are wannabe followers and wannabe saboteurs, the well-meaning and the conspiratorial, neighbors we like, others we refuse to trust, family we put up with (or don't), coworkers we admire, mentors we respect, activists we fear, leaders we oppose. A lengthy list indeed. And this is what is shared among such a collection of souls: people standing in the way of, objecting to, arguing against Jesus. Road blockers.

Mystery floats in and over the murky baptismal ripples of the Jordan River. To this day, thousands throng to wade in those waters to receive, to remember, to renew, to celebrate baptism. Jesus came there too and was met by his cousin, the famous, wild, wandering baptizer, who tried to stop him. Make of John's protest what you will (humility, confusion, disagreement, panic, pride?), his inclination was to prevent Jesus' public repentance, Jesus' plain-to-be-seen-and-heard turning away from the expectations of the world order toward the divine imagination of God.

It is not always (more than likely rarely, though at times it surely is) evil intention that is the seed that grows to oppose God's invocation to take delight in merciful justice and breathe the spirit of righteousness. We clash, as John the Baptizer clashed (how often?), with heaven's hopes and blessings for all that God created in goodness, even as we are unmindful of our own dissent.

It is for us, in our moments and ways of objecting, that God—ever mindful of us—parts heaven's clouds, that we might see and hear the way of God's beloved Son.