



Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

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

Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

Church: 419-332-6820

faithchurch@amplex.net

www.faithfremont.org

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 8, 2026

Setting 3 with Holy Communion

*Congregation please stand as you are able.

Introduction

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.

Prelude:

Canon

Pachelbel

(10:30) Handbell Choir:

Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace

arr. K. McChesney

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: I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.

C : Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

P: You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before others and give glory to your Father in heaven.

C: Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

P: You are the children of light. For you were once darkness, but now you are the light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

C: Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

***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: Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who
call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do,
and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ,
our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

WORD

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

First Reading:

Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]

Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked.

R: A reading from Isaiah, the 58th chapter.

¹ Shout out; do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

³ “Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers.

⁴ You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
^{9a} Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

[^{9b} If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.]

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Reading:

Psalm 112:1-9 [10]

- ¹ Hallelujah! Happy are they who fear the LORD
and have great delight in God's commandments!
² **Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.**
³ Wealth and riches will be in their house,
and their righteousness will last forever.
⁴ **Light shines in the darkness for the upright;
the righteous are merciful and full of compassion.**

⁵ It is good for them to be generous in lending
and to manage their affairs with justice.

⁶ **For they will never be shaken;
the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.**

⁷ They will not be afraid of any evil rumors;
their heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ **Their heart is established and will not shrink,
until they see their desire upon their enemies.**

⁹ They have given freely to the poor, and their righteousness stands fast
forever; they will hold up their head with honor.

[¹⁰ **The wicked will see it and be angry; they will gnash their teeth
and pine away; the desires of the wicked will perish.**]

Second Reading:

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]

Though people such as the Corinthians are enamored with human philosophy and wisdom, Paul continuously presents God's hidden wisdom which is Jesus Christ crucified. True spiritual maturity involves judging ourselves and others in light of God's revelation in the cross.

R: A reading from 1 Corinthians, the second chapter.

¹ When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶ Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory ⁸ and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For what human knows what is

truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. [¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶ "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.]

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 5:13-20**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages his followers to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, doing good works and keeping God's commandments.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: [Jesus said:] ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

***Sermon Hymn:** *Arise, Your Light Has Come!*

ELW 314

***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: Your church does ministry in many and various ways. Keep the baptized true to the mind of Christ, that our works and witness bring hope to a troubled world. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Your marvelous creation cries out to you. Restore polluted air, soil, and water sources to wholeness. Guard honeybees, elephants, great whales and songbirds from harm, and renew the face of the earth. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Your people in every nation suffer injustice, poverty, and the threat of violence. Guide those in authority to govern with compassion, and bring peace to war zones. We pray for our enemies. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Your blessings are poured out for all in need. Help and heal any who experience trauma, discrimination, disease, hunger, abuse, or persecution. Comfort those who are sick or grieving, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for 10 seconds for people to be named)*. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Your wisdom guides this congregation and its ministries. Sustain our ordained leaders, staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. Form us to be salt and light for the neighbors we serve, following the example of Christ. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

R: Your saints rejoice at your heavenly banquet. We give thanks for their lives of faith, trusting that we also will be embraced by your eternal love. 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: *Lord, Shine Your Love Through Me*

D. Paxton

*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.
By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

***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) Praise Choir:

A Light of Hope

M. Burrows

(10:30) Communion Hymns:

TBOB 44 Emmanuel (sing twice)

TBOB 134 Jesus, Name Above All Names

***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.

(8:00) Handbell Choir: ***Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace***
arr. K. McChesney

Sending Song:** ***We Are Marching in the Light ELW 866

***Dismissal**

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

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude:** ***We Are Marching in the Light South African Traditional

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WE'RE THANKFUL YOU'VE JOINED US IN WORSHIP. As the psalmist says, "How good it is to sing praises to our God" (Psalm 147:1, NRSV). Let's open our hearts and minds to the One who loves us, sustains us and blesses us beyond measure.

ALTAR FLOWERS today are given to wish a Happy 91st Birthday to Dad and Congratulations to Mom and Dad, Ron and Nancy Root, on your 73rd Wedding Anniversary, today, by Randy & Betsy Copley.



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!

2026 TRIPS PREVIEW POTLUCK WITH 2025 TRIP SHARING AND FELLOWSHIP – If you wish to hear about the 2026 bus trips we have planned, then gather your friends, relatives and neighbors who may want to join us on the trips and come join us on **Sunday, February 15th from 3:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.** Everyone brings their own table service, beverage and a dish to share with others. Please RSVP to Yvonne Vogel at 419-307-1774 by February 8th. Hope to see you there!

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.*

The Chosen, Season 4

- The viewing of *The Chosen, Season 4* will begin at Faith Lutheran Church **Lounge** or **Sanctuary** on **Wednesday, February 18th at 5 p.m.** and will continue Wednesdays at 5 p.m. through Lent.
- If you are interested in *The Chosen, 40 days with Jesus, Book FOUR* devotion, sign up on the bulletin board by Sunday, Feb 8th.
- You can find *The Chosen* at a library or stream through Chromecast, Amazon Firestick, Apple TV, and Roku or TheChosen.tv/app for more information.
- Questions should be directed to Cheryl Paeth at 419-205-3659.

TRINITY UMC IS HAVING A CARE & SHARE FOUR COURSE DINNER – on Saturday, February 28, 2026 at the church (204 N. Wayne Street, Fremont) at 5:30 p.m. Includes: appetizers, salad, entrée course with sides, dessert, and beverage. Entrée choice is Ham Loaf or Salisbury Steak. **Reservations (Prepay please) must be made by February 21st.** Cost is \$17 per person or \$16 for two or more. To make reservations call 419-332-8167. This is a great way to share a caring moment with your family, your best friend, your neighbor, as a couple, with a grandchild, or a child during February!

LIGHT SUPPERS FOR LENT 2026: Light suppers will be provided prior to the Lenten services on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m., on February 25th through March 25th.

THANK YOU to the following groups that have volunteered to provide a meal before the Wednesday Lenten services in the Fellowship Hall!

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| February 25 | Faith Church Council |
| March 4 | Both Adult Sunday School classes |
| March 11 | Faith Fellowship Group |
| March 18 | Faith Women of the ELCA |
| March 25 | Christian Worship Committee |

Many hands make light work. **Please join us and consider bringing a dish to share!** A sign-up sheet to assist these groups with additional salads, sides, and desserts is posted on the bulletin board in the coat room area for anyone who wishes to share their culinary talents.

Thank you for sharing with others your bountiful blessings from God!

PRAYING DAILY



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, Betty Nielsen, Gary Overmyer, Sandie Reed, Ken & Gloria Root, Bob Schneider, Janet Tressler, Linda Woessner. Adeline Bame, 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



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 **Praise Choir Director:** Becky Fox
Sr. Choir Accompanist: Amy Wagner **Flautist:** Marilyn Ring
Handbell Choir Director: Darla Brown

8:00 a.m.

Greeter: Kyle & Brittany Neill Lillian Harder
Lector: Jim Seibert Darla Brown
Acolyte: Noah Seibert

Communion: J. Seibert/ B. Dymond Randy Brown & Marie Reiselt
Counters: Dave Kocsis* & Niki Wasserman

Fellowship Time Host:

Altar Guild: Judi Neill, Heidi Tooman, Ann Waggoner
Ushers: (8:00) Dave Ring

ASSISTING NEXT WEEK

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Darla Brown
Sr. Choir Director: Darla Brown **Choir Accompanist:** Amy Wagner

8:00 a.m.

Greeter: Jim & Kim Smith Pat Forsyth & Kathleen McClain
Lector: Annie Gazdecki Miranda Garlock
Acolyte: Karly Paeth

Communion: K. Smith/A. Gazdecki R. Brown & L. Krynock
Counters: Becky Dymond* & Scott Miarer

Fellowship Time Host:

Altar Guild: Judi Neill, Heidi Tooman, Ann Waggoner
Ushers: (10:30) Matthew Garlock

FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – Feb. 8 to Feb. 15

Sunday

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

Monday

Feb. 9-----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 – Home vs. Clyde

Tuesday

Feb. 10-----

Wednesday

Feb. 11-----6:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 7:30 p.m. Praise Choir
 7:30 p.m. Senior Choir

Thursday

Feb. 12-----3 p.m. Christ Care
 5-9:30 p.m. Hall Reserved – Heidi Tooman

Friday

Feb. 13-----

Saturday

Feb. 14-----9:15 a.m. Christ Care

Sunday NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE

Feb. 15-----8 & 10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time
 2:30 p.m. Faith Filled Travelers Trips Preview Potluck

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026: ATTENDANCE: 140 – OFFERING: \$7,635.52

GOSPEL MESSAGE

February 8, 2026
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Lamp Is Already Lit

“This little light of mine, I’m goin’-a let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine” (ELW 677). There’s nothing quite like the joyous call and response of a whole congregation singing together the words of this beloved African American spiritual. The text and tune make it very hard to keep any lamps under a bushel basket!

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls us to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Many congregations use these words during the rite of Holy Baptism. But “Let *your* light shine” doesn’t imply that the light belongs only to us or to the church. The first chapter of Genesis clarifies this. At the beginning of creation, God speaks light into existence, making light God’s first gift to the whole world. In that light, God creates everything, including humankind, which is made in the divine image, according to God’s likeness.

Living in harmony with God’s word, letting our light shine with “good works” that glorify God, is not about striving for perfection. Because God’s light has existed from the beginning, it is not something we earn or achieve for ourselves. We don’t provide the spark that lights the lamp—it is already lit by God. Our job is to let the light shine. To be light for the world, then, is to be none other than who we have been from the beginning. Therein lies not only the fulfillment of God’s word, but also our own fulfillment as God’s children and light-bearers in the world.