February 2024

151 years—1873-2024

CELEBRATING MINISTRY OF CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Cultivating Epiphanies

When we talk about epiphany, we're talking about God's divine revelation to the world in Jesus Christ. The liturgical day celebrating The Epiphany is January 6th and recalls the manifestation of the Christ Child to the Magi (Matthew 2.1–12). The time which follows is liturgically "the season after Epiphany" and is part of Ordinary Time (with green colored paraments.) The lessons for these Sundays focus on the in-breaking and revelatory work of Jesus in the world. Themes of light, witness, and divinity are at the heart of the readings.

This year, the season after Epiphany is longer (especially compared to last year!), and it affords us an opportunity to relish in God's revelation. Many of us give up things for Lent, and some take up a new practice. But today is the day that the Lord has made, and it is a perfect one to take a moment and consider where you have witnessed the goodness of the Lord today. Where has the Love of God been revealed? When has grace shown up? How has the Holy Spirit been alive and working today?

When talking about the Bible, we sometimes use another, similar word: "Theophany" (from the Greek words for God and show.) As you consider the epiphanies you see in your daily living, you might also reflect on the theophanies in scripture. Stories like Jacob wresting with God (Genesis 32); The Angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3); the Transfiguration (Matthew 17.1–8; Mark 9.2–13; Luke 9.28–36) or when Jesus appears to Saul/Paul (Acts 9.1–19).

Blessings,

Pr Evan

Questions for Reflection:

- In what ways have you seen and experienced God cultivating epiphanies around you and for you? What did they feel like? What did you sense? What might you have imagined?
- How might God be inviting you to cultivate epiphanies? For yourself? For your faith community? For your larger community?
- What potentially harder conversations is God calling you to have? Whom will they be with? What might they be about?

What sort of epiphanies have you had recently that have left an impact? What were they? How were you changed by them?

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Announcements

The Evangelism and Outreach Team oversees a nonperishable food and personal care item collection.

Please February donations go to:

Blue Valley Community Action

Women's

Evening Bible Study

3rd Wednesday of the month - 7:30 PM
at the Church with Pastor Hillary

We are beginning a new Bible Study offering for those who work during the day in mind--of course, all are welcome to attend. We will start with meeting at the church on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 PM. February 19th will be our first meeting.

Please let Pastor Hillary know if you are interested in trying this out. She is very excited to start this with women of all generations!

We extend our sympathy to the Elaine Westring family. Elaine passed away at her home on January 22, 2025. There will be a celebration of life at the Calvary Lutheran Church– Swede Home, on Saturday May 31 at 11:00 with a lunch to follow at the church.

W.E.L.C.A. News

*Happy Valentine's Day! You are a blessing to many!

*Service for February is Thankoffering #1, which goes to support women at home and around the world.

*Altar care for February will be Carolyn Nielsen & Bonnie Carlson. March will be Deb Cramer & Kay Jones.

*Flowers and Cheer in February & March will be by Ruth Circle. April and May will be by Miriam Circle. Thank you for watering any plants.

*Thank you Kay Jones for creating and delivering the purple WELCA yearbook for 2025! We rely on it all year long, and it means so much that you do such an excellent job on it every year.

*Save the date: March 22 will be the NSWO Spring Gathering at Salem Lutheran in Stromsburg! The theme is "Loved Beyond Measure." Registration fee will be $20, and we should be receiving registration info by the end of February.

*Special Request from Genesis House: Sherri said they are hosting an event they're calling "Ignite" in Polk County on March 22nd. She has asked if we could furnish some homemade cookies for this, so of course I said "Yes". At circle, I'll be asking for 4 people who can bring 2 dozen cookies each. Thanks so much for your help!

FEBRUARY

Ruth – 2/12 Linda 9 am @ 4th St. Coffeehouse, Stromsburg

Miriam – 2/13 9 am at 4th Street Coffee house, Stromsburg

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." ~ Romans 12: 9-10

God's Blessings,

Cheryl

Church happenings

Pastor Hillary and Pastor Evan will keep the youth group updated regarding meeting dates. They use either text or email notification.

.The Ev and Outreach committee (Fran, Cheryl, Linda) are feeling a bit like we are feeding the 5,000. What started with a generous food pantry donation from High Plains students and faculty has resulted in a new project for Polk County. We started out with the Stromsburg Senior Center, asking if they would be willing to have a free food pantry in their Center—they were very accepting of the idea, and since then, we have added pantries at the Polk Senior Center and the Osceola Library. We are considering some locations in Shelby.

Our hope is to stock the pantries with the excess donations we have from High Plains and continued pantry donations from our members. WE will continue to do monthly donations to both Osceola Blue Valley and Genesis House. Our dream to is to work with the Osceola and Stromsburg Ministerial organizations and community churches to stock the pantry.

We plan to contact Polk County News and have them do an article as soon as we have locations up and running. These mini pantries do not replace Blue Valley and other existing food locations, including the Back Pack program. Instead we hope to have a mini pantry set up in each community, for those who need help with a meal or two. With the locations at the libraries, we hope to be available for kids who need a meal or two that they can make themselves.

Swede Home has always lived our mission of "Know God, Love God, **SHARE** God's Love" and do "God's Work with our hands" We are grateful to have this new mission open to us, and that we are able to share with outhers.

Church Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather and we cancel church services, there are several ways we contact members. We use a program called "Flock Notes" where we can notify members through text message or email, notifying them of cancellations.

We also use Channel 10/11 closing notifications to provide that information. As soon as the decision has been made, we post the cancellation on that Channel. They run the post as soon as we send it (usually on Saturday evening, and they run it continuously Sunday mornings.)

We will try make phone calls to any of those involved in the Sunday service, but if you have any doubt about if services have been cancelled. Please contact Linda at or either Pastor—their numbers are listed elsewhere in the newsletter.

We recently had prayer requests from Ben Carlson and family. Ben sends us these updates:

My cousin Julie continues to improve slowly. She can talk now—with physical therapy her walking has improved too . She wants to thank everyone for all those prayers that have given her strength to carry on and continue to get better.

In my last visit with my friend, Alica, she wanted to let you all know that she had felt all our prayers and that helped her to be better prepared for her journey with the Good Lord.

Thank you

Ben Carlson

THANK YOU

Thank you, thank you for the ham, potatoes, pie and green beans. You made our Christmas special to have a fine dinner.

God bless you who provided this food for us this year.

Kenny and Sherry Fanning

Dearest members,

On behalf of ESU 7 and all of our students and families, we would like to express our sincere gratitude!! Your continued generosity helps to put a smile on each and every one of our students and provides a full Christmas dinner for many families.

We were able to buy gifts for 55 students and provide 12 Christmas meals for families in need.

Again, we couldn't do this without all of you.!

May you all have a Blessed and Healthy Holiday season and new year.

Sincerely, staff at ESU 7

Genesis House is grateful for your generous donation of pantry items and money. Your continued support plays a crucial role in helping us further our mission! Your donation will directly benefit survivors of domestic violence and enable us to provide prevention education to the youth in Polk and Butler counties.
Thank you for your kindness.

Sheri Nielsen, Director

Thank you

Dear Calvary Lutheran Friends:

Thank you for your recent generous gift of $48*to Lutheran World Relief's Quilt and Kit shipping fund.

Every quilt and kit has a story. Thank you for ensuring these items get where they need to go. Your kindness brings comfort and hope to people, Just when they need it most.

God bless you and your generous spirit.

Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard

(With the Thrivent card and your generous free will offering, we had an additional $48. We sent that along with the personal care kits to help with the cost of shipping . Linda)

Dear Calvary Lutheran Women of the ELCA

The holiday season is always a favorite time at the Oaks Indian Mission, and for good reason. Children and holidays naturally go hand in hand. Their excitement creates a special atmosphere that is unlike any other time of they year. These occasions provide us with wonderful opportunities to share gifts and express gratitude—things we might not otherwise discuss. There is truly something sacred about these moments in time, making them feel special and holy.

Thank you for your gift of $300 which blesses this ministry with the means to make these holidays especially momentous for our kids here at the Oaks.

Thank you for your support for those in need Wishing all of you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season.

Blessings,

Dan Cooper, Executive Director

THANK YOU

Greetings from Lutheran Family Ministry

THANK YOU for helping us to serve Christ by serving others through your support and prayers. We received your generous gift of $250 for those we serve together! Thank you.

It is wonderful to be a partner with you in providing campus ministry for so many young people who are eager to grow their faith.. Thank you, women of Calvary Lutheran, for your steadfast support and prayers.

Jon Fredricks

Executive Director, Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministry

Dear Calvary Lutheran WELCA:

Thank you for your generous monetary donation to our children in need lunch fund at Cross County Schools.

The impact of your gift is seen in the smiles of those you help!!
In appreciation:

Cross County School District

Good morning,

On behalf of everyone at Shelby-Rising City Public Schools, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous donation to our lunch program to help our families who may need it. Your support makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our school families, and we are deeply appreciative of your kindness.

Although families may not know who was behind it, we can guarantee that they are thankful for your thoughtfulness. Together, we are creating a brighter future for our communities and it doesn't go unnoticed.

Thank you again for your generosity and for being an invaluable part of the SRC family. Please pass this along to your entire staff on behalf of us. Thank you again!

Extra Mile Award

Our annual "Going the Extra Mile Award" is a recognition of a commitment of faith, time and talents, both here at Calvary and in our community. It is also, as mentioned in our service last week and today, a recognition of a person sharing their God given gifts. We have 4 people to award this year. These are some of the things we have witnessed over the years:

We witness these gifts at our annual ice cream social and also at Midwest Covenant Home, so that those folks can also celebrate an ice cream social. They have shared their gifts as assistant ministers, readers, ushers, Sunday School teachers and Christmas program director. They have served on the Church Council and on various committees such as the funeral, worship and music, Memorial and Endowment here at Calvary. They have all been a great help and a blessing to our congregation over the years.

More than anything though, is that these 4 people volunteer their gifts. They haven't been asked, instead they have numerous times volunteered or asked directly, "What can we do to help?" That in itself is Going the Extra Mile. Please join me in congratulating our recipients for this award today: Carolyn and Lew Nielsen and Tom and Mary Stevens!!

Pictured: Kent Adelson, Council Chair, Lew and Carolyn Nielsen, Tom and Mary Stevens

Calvary Lutheran Church
Nebraska Synod, ELCA
950 129th Road
Stromsburg, NE 68666
Church Phone: (402)764-5981
www.calvaryswedehomechurch.com
Email calvaryswedehomechurch@gmail.com
Facebook "Swede Home"

Every Member of the Congregation—Ministers
Council Vice Chairman
, Council Secretary
Amy Harris and Janet Nielsen, Music
Linda Fuhr, Church Office Manager
LeeAnn Willhoft, Custodian

Council Members:
Andrew Adelson, Jennifer Fjell, Dan Oquist,
Missy Althouse, Kris Udey, Randy Lott, Ben Carlson
Jarrett Althouse, youth representative

Pastor Evan Cell Phone 402-689-5495 (text or call)
Email: evan@pastorchristensen.com

Pastor Hillary Cell Phone 402-980-1102 (text or call)
Email: hillary@pastorchristensen.com

IF you are texting or emailing a pastor, please include both pastors in the text or email

Please contact Linda Fuhr, Church Office Manager at

calvryswedehomechurch@gmail.com or text or call 402-366-2091, If you have not done so, follow **Swede Home** on our Facebook page.

MONSTER COOKIES

From Cheryl Jones

(no flour)

1 cup brown sugar

¾ cup white sugar

½ cup butter (room temperature)

3 large eggs

1 ½ cups creamy peanut butter

1 Tablespoon vanilla extract

2 teaspoons baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

4 ½ cups oatmeal (*old fashioned)*

1 ¼ cups M & M's

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 350*

2. Cream butter & sugars until light & fluffy, about 3 minutes.

3. Mix in eggs, one at a time.

4. Beat in peanut butter & vanilla till well mixed.

5. Add soda, salt & oatmeal & mix well.

6. Stir in M & M's & chocolate chips just until mixed in.

7. Using medium cookie scoop (1 ½ Tablespoons), place rounds of dough on cookie sheet about 2" apart.

8. Bake in preheated oven about 10-12 minutes (only until very lightly browned).

9. Let cool on cookie sheets about 5 minutes, then remove to wire cooling rack.

When cooled, store in a tightly covered container or freeze to keep longer. Recipe makes about 50 cookies.

(If you double the recipe for lots of cookies, the 28 oz. jar of creamy peanut butter measures 3 cups)

We Reach to all our faith family in prayer and celebration

Remember in your prayers

Kathi Jones
Duane Jones
Janice Forsberg
Melissa Forsberg
June Larson
Beth Jones Wienck
Jan Wells Bachman
Rich Schneider

Cheryl Hubka

- Genesis House and Living Waters Rescue Mission, Blue Valley Action
- Houses for Health recipients.
- Bishop Scott Johnson and the Nebraska Synod staff
- Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and all ELCA congregations and members
- Brody Ienn in service to our country
- Our government leaders
- We pray for those dealing with addiction

To request prayers please email the church or call Linda (402-366-2091) or Cheryl (402-366-4797)

February

Assistant Minister— Sarah Johnson

Reader—Carol Nicholson

Ushers – Brad and Sue Sundberg

Altar Care— Carolyn Nielsen and Bonnie Carlson

Acolyte

Bell Ringer –

Anniversaries

February

21 Mike and Anita Haack

Birthdays

February

01 Claire Smith

05 Lynn Hofmann

09 Kamdyn Udey

13 Carter Fjell

25 Kolton Neujahr

25 Allen Peterson

29 Peyton Hofmann

29 Rylee Hofmann

We thank all those who agree to help with the worship service each month. **Please let Jean Waller or Carolyn Nielsen know if you can help**

The Sign-up sheets for 2025 are on the ushers counter. Please consider when you can serve

February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 10:30 am Music and scripture service	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 10:30 am Worship Council	10	11 7 pm Men's Bible Study	12 9 am Ruth Circle at 4th Street	13 9 m Miriam Circle at 4th Street	14	15
16 10:30 am Worship with Communion	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 10:30 am Worship Service	24	25	26	27	28	

The Parsonage is move in ready! Or Ready enough to move in!!!!

January 2025 has brought some very important changes to Swede Home! After some very serious water damage to the parsonage, 30 plus months ago, going through leadership from some very capable interim pastors, welcoming Pr Hillary and Pr Evan as shared ministers to a three church call—we are seeing the fruits of our labor materialize …..On Friday, January 24th—Pr Hillary, Pr Evan, Wilder and Sutton moved into the newly remodeled and repaired parsonage at Swede Home.

A crew of 30 plus helpers from Rising City, Augustana and Swede Home were on had with trailers, pickups, and arm strong power started the day at 8:30 at Augustana, and with that fantastic help, everything was moved and unpacked (sort of) at Swede Home by noon! Food was donated by members from the 3 churches and approximately 30 people were served lunch at Swede Home Church.

At our worship service on Sunday January 26, we welcomed Emily Adelson as a transfer member to Calvary-Swede Home. Andrew Adelson as council representative, welcomed Emily to our faith family. Welcome Emily! Special guests for the worship service were Emily's family and friends.

At the January 26th service we welcomed Ben Carlson to the church council, and Randy Lott and Kris Udey were welcomed to serve a 2nd term. Members of the council were installed: Pictured are: Pr Hillary, Kris Udey, Dan Oquist, Randy Lott, Andrew Adelson, Missy Althouse, Jarrett Althouse, and Ben Carlson. Absent: Jen Fjell

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Lenten Services:

Ash Wednesday Mar 5—service at First –Rising City

March 12—Midweek at Swede Home with meal at 6

March 19—Midweek at Swede Home with meal at 6

March 26—Midweek at Swede Home with meal at 6

April 2—Midweek at Swede Home with meal at 6

April 9—Midweek at Swede Home with meal at 6

April 13—Palm Sunday

April 17 — Maundy Thursday at First –Rising

April 18—Good Friday at Swede Home

April 19 —Saturday Vigil at Swede Home

April 20—Easter

Tentative Noon Lenten Luncheon Schedule

	Location	**Preacher**
March 12	St. Paul Lutheran	Evan
March 19	Calvary Swede Home	Raleigh
March 26	St. Vincent	Soonil
April 2	United Methodist	Allan
April 9	*Community Center? – Pot-luck* UMC back up	Hillary

Council Notes

January 2025

Church Council met on January 8th at 6:00 pm

Present: Kent, Dan, Kris, Randy, Jarrett, Andrew, Jennifer Kay, Pastor Evan
Absent: None

- Budget discussion
- Land line phone: No dial tone. Still looking into.
- Extra mile award: Tom & Mary Stevens and Carolyn & Lew Nielsen
- Parsonage update: Nearing completion.
- Will have separate offerings for Dana Center in Blair and Backpack Program
- Agenda for annual meeting:
  - Extending call to Pastors.
  - Vote on 2-point congregation/continued shared ministry with First English.
  - Parsonage: We have met the approved $80,000.00 goal and any excess will go back to the building fund.
  - All reports due to Linda by January 15.

On December 8th the Church Council voted not to recommend the renewing of the three Church Agreement with First English—Rising City, Augustana –Genoa and Calvary Lutheran-Swede Home. Council voted to present at the Annual Congregational meeting a ministerial agreement between First English -Rising City and Calvary Lutheran-Swede Home. Both Pastors submitted their resignations as called ministers of the three Church Agreement.

Council approved the call to Pr Evan Christensen 3/4 time and Pr Hillary Christensen 1/4 time to Calvary Swede Home, to be shared with First English-Rising City 65 % and 35%.

Both recommendations were voted on at the annual meeting on January 26 and approved unanimously

Treasurer's Report

	December 2024
Beginning Balance	**$14,291.74**
Offerings:	
General Offerings	15,091.35
Christmas Meals Offerings	229.00
Facility Use	250.00
Church Sign South of Stromsburg on Hwy 81	500.00
Church Mutual-refund; Worker's Comp Premium	696.00
ELCA Disaster Relief	5.00
ELCA Mission Share	3,590.00
First English Rising City; Nov Shares	1,931.34
Augustana Genoa; Nov Shares	3,045.49
	25,338.18
Transfers:	
Thrivent SAV for WELCA Retreat balance	27.72
Improvement; Lichti's Appliances for parsonage	6,359.55
Expenses:	
Vanco eCheck Monthly Fee	9.73
Office Supplies	11.17
Text Messaging System - Monthly Fee	22.00
WELCA Retreat balance	27.72
Economy Kitchen Supplies	36.36
Cody's Computer Maintenance Plan	39.99
USPO Stamps for Treasurers Use	73.00
Christ Candle	92.69
Christ In Our Home	108.40
Fall Leaf Pick-up	150.00
Christmas Meals paid with Offerings	229.00
Christmas Meals thru General Budget	251.62
New Church Laptop	549.99
Church Sign South of Stromsburg on Hwy 81	1,263.00
Lichti's Appliances for parsonage	6,359.55
NE Synod ELCA Mission Share	1,595.00
First English Rising City; December Share	1,943.59
Augustana Genoa; December Share	2,983.83
Utilities:	
Church	994.08
Parsonage	211.03
Genoa Parsonage	125.21
Salaries:	
Pastors Hillary & Evan Christensen	2,684.96
Portico Benefit Services	1,266.75
Commuting Reimbursement	158.33
SECA	236.23
Mileage Reimbursement	53.44
Cell Phone Reimbursement	38.00
First Call Formation Retreat	68.25
Amy, Janet, Diana, Lois	457.86
Lay/Music Mileage	392.62
LeeAnn	250.73
Linda	533.32
	23,217.45
Balance as of December 31, 2024:	**$22,799.74**
Designated Offerings Transferred to:	
Improvement Fund for Parsonage	21,065.00
Thrivent Grant to Thrivent Choice SAV Acct	163.00
Poinsettias with matching Offerings were:	159.00