

Sumner Center Newsletter

January 2026

Pastors Notes... We use all types of methods and devices to regulate and order our days, weeks, and years. Even the words “day,” “week,” and “year” represent conventions society has adopted to help us coordinate our activities. Whether it is a calendar, a watch, an almanac, or a day planner, we need these devices to keep us on track and to help us avoid confusion.

The church also has its own way of keeping Christians “on track” called the church year. The church year is divided into seasons, and whereas our regular calendar might not always point us to the eternal blessings we have in Christ Jesus, the church seasons focus our attention on the different facets of our Savior’s life and work.

In December we celebrated Advent, a time where we look forward to Jesus’ coming, both on Christmas morning and on the Last Day. Now we move into the season of Epiphany. “Epiphany” means “to manifest or appear,” and although this season might not receive as much commercial attention as Christmas, the church has been celebrating Epiphany since the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The earliest Christian celebrations centered on Easter and Pentecost, and all further developments of the yearly cycle, including Epiphany, were built around these important celebrations.

During Epiphany we celebrate the manifestations of our Lord.

At Christ’s circumcision, we celebrate our Lord’s manifestation as the “light to the Gentiles” and the “glory of Israel.”

In Christ’s baptism, we celebrate our Lord’s manifestation as the Son of God with whom God himself is well pleased.

And, as our Lord is presented to the Wise Men, we celebrate Christ’s manifestation to the entire world.

Epiphany is our time to focus on the manifestation and appearing of our Lord as the Messiah, sent by God to free the world from sin, death, and condemnation. May this time of Epiphany help us all to focus on Jesus’ manifestations in our own lives, through baptism, the Word, and the Lord’s Supper, because in Christ’s manifestation as God’s answer to our sin, we all find life, hope, and salvation. May the Lord bless and keep you all during this Epiphany season.



**Sunday Worship:
In Sanctuary at
11:15am**

**&
Sumner Center UMC
Facebook Page**

**Visit our Church
Website at:**

<http://www.sumnercenter.com>

**Donations may be sent to our mailing
address:
25378 151st Ave
Spring Valley, Mn 55975**

Pastoral Support Team

Pastor Bridget Sheely

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Grace and Peace in the name of Jesus Christ: If you have items you would like to be published in the newsletter, please contact

Pastor Bridget by the 3rd Thursday of the preceding month by emailing your information or dropping at Church. The light of God remains to shine bright in our community only by your generous giving heart! If you would like to donate a gift, you may send donations to the address above or deliver it in person during Sunday morning worship service

Calendar of Events

(Subject to change and/or be added to as the need arises)

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 	2	3
4 11:15 am Worship 	5 SPRC meeting with the DS @ Grand Meadow 4pm	6	7	8	9	10
11 11:15 am Worship 	12	13	14 Confirmation Zoom Class @ 6:30pm	15 Brownsdale UMC Noon Potluck Dinner	16	17
18 11:15 am Worship 	19 	20	21	22	23	24
25 11:15 am Worship 	26	27	28 Confirmation Zoom Class @ 6:30pm	29	30	31

January Worship Schedule



January 4, 2026

Tony Derfahren Leading

Today we celebrate a beautiful worship service!

Epiphany Service of Lessons, Carols



January 11, 2026

Pastor Jon Leading

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus presented himself to John to be baptized in the Jordan. So let us find our center on this Baptism of the Lord Sunday in Matthew's account of this glorious day: At this festival of the Christian year, we not only remember Jesus' baptism, but we celebrate our own: the baptism we share with Christ.

Today we gather to celebrate the reaffirmation of our baptismal covenant



January 18, 2026

Pastor Jon Leading

Too often, we spend time wishing – wishing we had more people or more resources or more volunteers or more activity. But what if, instead, we were simply thankful? Today let's be thankful for the gifts we have, for the people we have, for how they give of themselves and their resources and give thanks for the mission and witness that we are able to do week by week.



January 25, 2026

Pastor Bridget Leading

This week we give thanks for our relationships.

We celebrate the life of the community, in fellowship, in learning together and serving together. We rejoice in our reach, which is always greater together than separately. There is an African proverb that says if you want to go fast go alone; but if you want to go far, then go together. We are in this for the long haul, all the way to the kin-dom of God. And along the way, we live by kin-dom rules, we

show kin-dom values, we rejoice in kin-dom priorities, which sometimes means we set aside our personal preferences for the good of the whole. But more often than not, we realize that our personal good is fulfilled by the good of the whole community

Prairieland Parish Events

BROWNSDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Community Noon Lunch

Monday, January 20th

12 O'clock – Noon

Come One – Come All!

Bring your friends!

Serving: hot dishes - Salads - Desserts - Beverages

FREE WILL DONATIONS

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Integration of body, mind, and spirit when SAD

An inspirational article from one of our conference friends - Diane Owen



November is my least favorite month. It gets dark. And cold. Followed by snow and ice. My mood takes a downward turn. My energy is lower. The sofa invites me to hunker down much earlier than usual. Walking and running outside can be treacherous. I go to bed early. — Diane Owen.

As winter settles in, I feel myself slowing down—like I'm preparing to hibernate. My body and soul know we've entered the dark, cold, isolating months of winter. Even gearing up to go outside for daily walks feels like a barrier. Add in overeating, snacking, too much screen time, and less social connection, and everything feels harder. — Keith Shew.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a real thing and amplifies the struggles many experience during this time of year. For some individuals, professional help is needed to assist with this challenging disorder. For others, adding in some intentional rhythms and practices can be useful in helping light break through the darkness.

Light. "Varied and many. Lamps and candles. And after Thanksgiving, Christmas décor with a lot of lights! The moment I notice a slight darkening of the sky, I get to work. A true light designed for SAD symptoms is a great desktop solution, especially on cloudy days," says Diane.

"Creating warm, soft indoor lighting opportunities during the winter months is actually one component of our season of darkness that I look forward to! Whether it's candles placed in areas where our family gathers, lamps turned low, a fire in the fireplace, or holiday lights that stay up past Christmas and become New Year's winter lights, lighting has been a welcome way to improve our moods!" says Keith.

Movement. "Movement is a form of mental health therapy for me. My running routine was upended with the early onset of cold, ice, and snow," related Diane. "So I chose to increase my strength training and push out the door for walks (with reluctance). Hearty Midwesterners might also embrace the activities available at this time of year: skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, ice skating, or hockey."

Outdoors and Nature. "Midwesterners need regular doses of Vitamin D, given our limited sunshine. My daily walks are really important to me. There's a rhythm to my time on the trail—part exercise, part time in nature, and part grounding myself for the day ahead," said Keith. "Each lap around the park has its own purpose: the first is to listen and be open to the Holy Spirit, with space for reflection and gratitude. The second is for me—music, an audiobook, or simply soaking in the beauty of the day (even a cold winter day). The third is for mentally mapping out the day ahead. I find that when my schedule doesn't allow for these walks, I feel off and it's harder to connect fully with my life and work."

Gratitude. "In a recent women's group, we were asked to select our favorite Christmas song. 'In the Bleak Midwinter' was my choice. Definitely a reflection of my spirit at the time!" said Diane. "Yet, it forced me to pause and think about the experience of Mary and Joseph and the birth of Christ in the dark, cold winter, as well as those who are unhoused all around us or cannot afford sufficient winter gear. My morning gratitude journaling took a different direction."

Laughter. There is nothing that helps the SADness of the winter doldrums than a good laugh. Seek out a fun sitcom or a "feel-good" movie with comedy intentionally. Check out this list.

Music. "Listening to and playing music is essential to me year-round, especially during the long winter months," says Keith. "I keep my guitar and drums set up and ready to go so I can jump in at any moment. Even a few minutes to play a favorite song or lay down a funky beat—often in-between Zoom meetings—gives me a huge lift. Finding little ways to bring more music into our days is such a great way to fill our souls and spaces with joy!"

Connection. "While I am blessed to have a spouse at home, he travels a lot for work," said Diane. "Isolation can intensify the SAD symptoms. Connection with another human (or a loving pet) can help immensely! Pushing myself out the front door on a cold, dark winter night can require too much effort. But a phone call, FaceTiming a friend or family member, setting up a ZOOM call—anything to remind me that I am not alone is helpful. When even that requires more energy than I can muster, diving into Scripture, a good devotional, or a podcast helps."

Schedule Joy. "I've learned that having something on my calendar—even a small spark of joy on the horizon—is one of the best ways I can push back against SAD. Even if it's weeks away, being able to look at the calendar and think, "Just a little longer until something fun!" brightens my mood during the long winter months," says Keith. "Anyone who knows me knows how much I love Disney parks—so if we're lucky enough to fit in a visit, we always try to schedule it during the long stretch after the holidays. But it doesn't have to be a big trip—plans like a night out with friends, a movie release you've been excited for, or a day trip to the city for shopping or to a favorite restaurant can bring that same lift. Having something special to anticipate makes winter feel a little shorter, a little brighter, and a whole lot warmer."

Spiritual Nurture. "Feeding the soul is essential. For some, the holiday season can add to our already diminishing spirits if it is a reminder of grief and loss. I dealt with a particularly tragic situation in December, some years ago, which was difficult to dig out of without a good dose of spiritual nutrition," said Diane. "Seek out a Blue Christmas service at your church or online, or, if you are the pastor, at another church."

Other Tools: It's important to integrate practices for body, mind, and spirit to address experiences of SAD-like symptoms in the winter months and year-round. Pick one or two to try and see what works. Tackling all is not realistic.

In this Advent season, we hear the familiar words of John 1:5: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

That light has come through Jesus, our Emmanuel, and continues to come as through the Spirit working through people who shine light into the dark spaces and seasons of our lives. Sometimes those people will be professionals—mental health counselors, support hotlines, and spiritual directors—who come alongside us when we realize we are not able to help ourselves. Sometimes the light comes through family, friends, or an area staff person who cares deeply about these challenges (a.k.a Diane Owen) who lead us to resources, insights, or experiences that will help the light break through. May we continue to encourage each other to seek and find that light.

Time to Open your Bibles!

January daily readings for the season of Epiphany

Thursday, January 01, 2026: New Year's Day

Friday, January 02, 2026: Psalm 20; Genesis 12:1-7; Hebrews 11:1-12;

Saturday, January 03, 2026: Psalm 72; Genesis 28:10-22; Hebrews 11:13-22;

Sunday, January 04, 2026: Second Sunday after Christmas Day

Monday, January 05, 2026: Psalm 72; Joshua 1:1-9; Hebrews 11:32-12:2;

Tuesday, January 06, 2026: Epiphany of the Lord

Wednesday, January 07, 2026: Psalm 72; 1 Kings 10:1-13; Ephesians 3:14-21;

Thursday, January 08, 2026: Psalm 29; 1 Samuel 3:1-9; Acts 9:1-9;

Friday, January 09, 2026: Psalm 29; 1 Samuel 3:10-4:1a; Acts 9:10-19a;

Saturday, January 10, 2026: Psalm 29; 1 Samuel 7:3-17; Acts 9:19b-31;

Sunday, January 11, 2026: Baptism of the Lord

Monday, January 12, 2026: Psalm 89:5-37; Genesis 35:1-15; Acts 10:44-48;

Tuesday, January 13, 2026: Psalm 89:5-37; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Acts 8:4-13;

Wednesday, January 14, 2026: Psalm 89:5-37; Isaiah 51:1-16; Matthew 12:15-21;

Thursday, January 15, 2026: Psalm 40:1-11; Isaiah 22:15-25; Galatians 1:6-12;

Friday, January 16, 2026: Psalm 40:1-11; Genesis 27:30-38; Acts 1:1-5;

Saturday, January 17, 2026: Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Kings 19:19-21; Luke 5:1-11;

Sunday, January 18, 2026: Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Monday, January 19, 2026: Psalm 40:6-17; Exodus 12:1-13, 21-28; Acts 8:26-40;

Tuesday, January 20, 2026: Psalm 40:6-17; Isaiah 53:1-12; Hebrews 10:1-4;

Wednesday, January 21, 2026: Psalm 40:6-17; Isaiah 48:12-21; Matthew 9:14-17;

Thursday, January 22, 2026: Psalm 27:1-6; 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Galatians 1:11-24;

Friday, January 23, 2026: Psalm 27:1-6; 1 Samuel 9:27-10:8; Galatians 2:1-10;

Saturday, January 24, 2026: Psalm 27:1-6; 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Luke 5:27-32;

Sunday, January 25, 2026: Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Monday, January 26, 2026: Psalm 27:7-14; Judges 6:11-24; Ephesians 5:6-14;

Tuesday, January 27, 2026: Psalm 27:7-14; Judges 7:12-22; Philippians 2:12-18;

Wednesday, January 28, 2026: Psalm 27:7-14; Genesis 49:1-2, 8-13, 21-26; Luke 1:67-79;

Thursday, January 29, 2026: Psalm 15; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 1 Peter 3:8-12;

Friday, January 30, 2026: Psalm 15; Deuteronomy 24:17-25:4; 1 Timothy 5:17-24;

Saturday, January 31, 2026: Psalm 15; Micah 3:1-4; John 13:31-35;

Name: _____ Date: _____

DIRECTIONS:
Find and circle the
vocabulary words
in the grid. Look
for them in all
directions including
backwards and
diagonally.

Epiphany

Word Search

BABY
BALTHAZAR
BAPTISM
BETHLEHEM
CASPAR
CHRISTIAN
EPIPHANY
FEAST
FIRST MIRACLE
FRANKINCENSE

M	S	I	T	P	A	B	B	A	L	T	H	A	Z	A	R	P	X	B
X	V	Y	D	U	U	Z	Z	N	F	B	E	R	D	Y	P	B	V	M
Y	B	A	B	S	R	W	I	F	Y	E	V	D	B	Q	R	G	C	K
D	H	L	T	W	E	L	F	T	H	D	A	Y	F	H	B	X	H	T
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S	Z	O	O	H	R	P	R	V	Z	R	U	X	W	E	N	G	Q	X
P	Q	N	L	C	Y	D	A	O	H	U	C	L	Z	N	Y	I	O	U
A	G	G	A	J	G	E	C	B	V	J	U	D	Y	A	D	N	U	S
R	C	R	O	I	H	C	L	E	M	B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M
D	H	T	X	I	S	E	E	Y	R	Z	M	C	M	T	G	L	G	K



GOLD	MYRRH
HEROD	REVELATION
HOLIDAY	SIXTH
HOPE	STAR
JANUARY	SUNDAY
JESUS	THREE KINGS
MAGI	TWELFTH DAY
MELCHIOR	WISE MEN