



## Welcome to Ascension Lutheran Church

We are so glad that you're here and have chosen to worship with us.

Coming to a new church can be a bit overwhelming and we hope that you feel a warm welcome here at Ascension.

Worship styles vary from church to church, so we've created this worship bulletin in hopes that it simplifies your worship experience and helps you to experience God's presence.

**Deacon Ellen Koester** is our minister and she strives to make each worship experience meaningful and engaging.

**Sunday, January 5, 2025**  
**Epiphany | Second Sunday of Christmas**

**Ascension Lutheran Church**

720 S. Germantown Road | East Ridge, TN 37412  
423-698-5047 | [ThisIsTheFeast.org](http://ThisIsTheFeast.org) | [office@ThisIsTheFeast.org](mailto:office@ThisIsTheFeast.org)

# Epiphany

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## THE ROAD ISN'T STRAIGHT

Today is the final Sunday of the “Words for the Beginning” series from Sanctified Art, LLC which we have been using since the beginning of Advent, Dec. 1. The weekly themes have been preparing and grounding us for all the beginnings we face in our lives from the beginning of a new year to new jobs or fresh starts and all the beginnings and endings that are part of our lives. The themes remind us:

- You are a Blessing
- We Can't Go Alone
- Do the Good that is Yours to Do
- Hope is Worth the Risk

We conclude the series today by reflecting on “The Road Isn't Straight.” We hope we have laid a good foundation for 2025. If you would like to continue to explore those foundations, there are a few devotional books available on a table in the narthex.

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## FAQs

**The Restrooms:** Take a left as you leave the worship space. Our main bathrooms are on the right. Follow the signs around the corner for individual, accessible bathrooms.

**Nursery:** Children are always welcome in worship. We have kid-friendly activity bags hanging in the entrance hall—with coloring books, crayons, and more.

**Guest Welcome:** Please use the QR code to let us know who you are. Or, you can use the guest sign-in book in the lobby.



# Gathering

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Ringing of the church bell

Prelude—Ascension Organist Lynn Frye

Welcome—Deacon Ellen Koester

*Standing* Call to Worship

How did you get here?

Piano side: **I walked, eyes looking up, following the star.**

Pulpit side: **I ran, lunging for a love that is bigger than me.**

Piano side: **I tumbled and fell, tender step after tender step.**

Pulpit side: **I ambled like a river, caught up in God's flow.**

Tell me again. How did you get here?

**C: I am here by God's grace and love's pull.**

Welcome home.

This is God's house.

There is room for you here.

**C: Let us worship our gracious God.**

You may wish to use this breath prayer to prepare for worship & throughout the week.



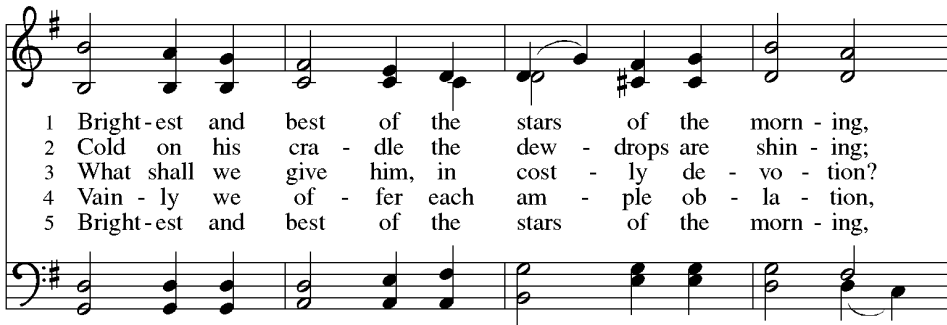
## BREATH PRAYER

INHALE: Each twist and turn

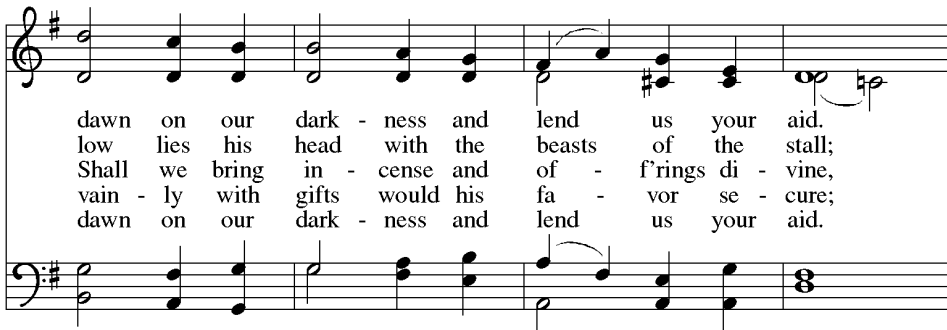
EXHALE: Invites me to follow you.

# Gathering

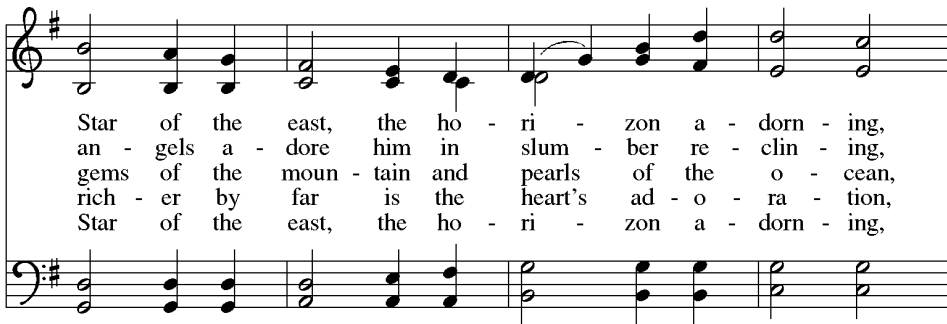
## Standing Hymn 303 Brightest and Best of the Stars



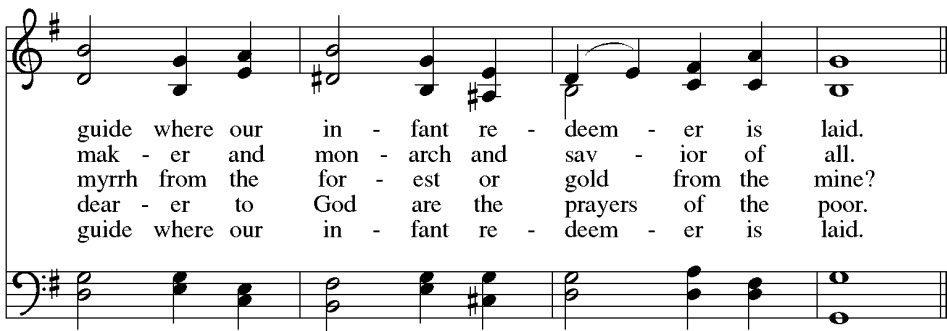
1 Bright-est and best of the stars of the morn - ing,  
2 Cold on his cra - dle the dew - drops are shin - ing;  
3 What shall we give him, in cost - ly de - vo - tion?  
4 Vain - ly we of - fer each am - ple ob - la - tion,  
5 Bright-est and best of the stars of the morn - ing,



dawn on our dark - ness and lend us your aid.  
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;  
Shall we bring in - cense and of - frings di - vine;  
vain - ly with gifts would his fa - vor se - cure;  
dawn on our dark - ness and lend us your aid.



Star of the east, the ho - ri - zon a - dorn - ing,  
an - gels a - dore him in slum - ber re - clin - ing,  
gems of the moun - tain and pearls of the o - cean,  
rich - er by far is the heart's ad - o - ra - tion,  
Star of the east, the ho - ri - zon a - dorn - ing,



guide where our in - fant re - deem - er is laid.  
mak - er and mon - arch and sav - ior of all.  
myrrh from the for - est or gold from the mine?  
dear - er to God are the prayers of the poor.  
guide where our in - fant re - deem - er is laid.

# Gathering

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## *Standing* Confession and Forgiveness

Friends, one of the gifts of confession is it allows us to begin again. For in this moment of prayer, we name our shortcomings and mistakes. We receive God's grace, and we start again. The slate is wiped clean. The prayer of confession is an act of beginning again and again and again. So join me in prayer. For even here, God is already doing something new. Let us begin again.

## *Silence for reflection*

Let us pray:

God of new beginnings,

**C: We admit that we often follow the well-worn path, simply because others have been there before. Sometimes this is holy and humble, but there are days when a new path needs to be tread. On those new-beginning days, O God, give us the courage to follow your star. Give us the courage to go home by another way. Give us the courage to kick up some dust and walk in a new direction for the sake of justice, love, and neighbor. For when you are doing a new thing, we want to have the courage to follow. With hope in our hearts we wander, we travel. Amen.**

Dear travelers, No matter the roads you've taken, the steps you've made, or the paths you've traveled, there is nowhere you could go that would land you outside of God's love. Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel:

**C: Regardless of the path we travel, of how lost we may get, or the twists and turns along the way, we do not walk alone. We are loved. We are forgiven. We have every chance to begin again. Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.**

# Gathering

Standing Hymn 671 Shine, Jesus, Shine

*Refrain*



Shine, Je - sus, shine, — fill this land with the Fa - ther's glo - ry;  
blaze, Spir - it, blaze, — set our hearts on fire. Flow, riv - er, flow, —  
— flood the na - tions with grace and mer - cy; send forth your Word, —  
Lord, and let there be light!

1. Lord, the light of your love is shin - ing, in the midst of the  
2. As we gaze on your king - ly bright - ness, so our fac - es dis -

dark - ness, shin - ing; Je sus, light of the world, shine up - on — us,  
play your like - ness, ev er chang - ing from glo - ry to glo - ry,  
set us free by the truth you now bring us. Shine on me,  
mir - rored here, may our lives tell your sto - ry, Shine on me,

*to Refrain*



shine on — me:  
shine on — me:

# Word

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Please join me in prayer:

God of starlight,

**C: We long to follow you. Like the Magi, we want to pick up the hems of our robes and run in your direction. Like the Magi, we want to kick up dust with our feet and make a joyful ruckus following your guiding star. Unfortunately, the stars can be hard to see from here. Your still, small voice can be hard to hear from here. So just as you guided the Magi, guide us. Draw our attention to your Word. Reveal what it is you want us to hear today, so that we can follow you. With hope in our hearts we pray, Amen.**

*Seated* First Reading | Isaiah 43:16-21

A Reading from Isaiah

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup>who brings out chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup>Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup>I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup>The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.

The Word of the Lord **C: Thanks be to God!**

# Word

## Standing Gospel Acclamation

### Standing Hymn 290 Go Tell It on the Mountain

*Refrain*



Go tell it on the moun - tain, o - ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;



go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!



1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,  
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth  
3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born;



*Refrain*



be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.  
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.  
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ - mas morn.





# Word

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## Gospel | Matthew 2:1-12

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew

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

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Word of the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God!**

*Seated Sermon*—Deacon Ellen Koester

*Silence for Reflection*

# Word

## Standing Hymn — The Road Winds Ever On



Fears of stray - ing from the path - way Plant - ed deep  
All our best laid plans can sha - tter Leav - ing us  
A world con - stant - ly in mo - tion E - vades our



in child - hood Come to haunt us when the road ends  
to mourn the loss Of the fu - ture we im - a - gined  
at - tempts to know What may be a - round the cor - ner

4



And the way a - head is ob - scured Then the Spi - rit  
And feel like our life is on pause At the edge the  
Or where a - ny road will go So the Spi - rit



wraps a - round us To pro - tect and re - as - sure  
Spi - rit's wait - ing There to fer - ry us a - cross  
stirs with - in us To be car - ried by the flow

7



And the road winds e - ver on \_\_\_\_\_

# Word

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## *Standing* Affirmation of Faith

Please join me in affirming our faith:

**C: We believe in a with-us God, a God who is beside us in the mountains and valleys, holding our hand through every bump and turn. And in the chaos of our journey, we believe that God sees what we cannot always see: a path home by another way. Therefore, trusting in this ever-present and guiding God, we lace up our shoes. We look for God's fingerprints in the world. We trust that there are paths still unexplored, paths that God has only begun to invite us down. And like the Magi, we dare to follow. May it be so, Amen.**

## *Kneeling/Standing* Prayers of Intercession

God of starlight, God of new beginnings, We are so grateful. We are so grateful to be here, at the start of a new year, fresh off the press. We are so grateful to be here, at the start of a new week, gathered in community. We are so grateful to begin again. So here at this beginning, we bring you our prayers. Holy God, for the people who stand at a crossroad, unsure of what decision to make—give them clarity.

For those who are weary and worn down by the switchbacks of life, for those walking with blisters, for those desperate to find their way home—provide them comfort.

For those who feel confined by paths that are too straight and narrow—guide them to wide open spaces. Show them your glory in the new path, the untamed path, the twists and the turns.

For those who walk alone—surround them with community. For those who walk afraid—grant them protection.

For those who want to walk home, but have found that home is no longer there—destroyed by war or disaster, deemed unsafe by our own human hands—may we see them. May we know their struggles and may we respond with compassion.

For those who stand out under the night sky, desperate to see a sign of your star—shine brightly. And for those who dance their way down the path, delighted by the beauty the journey brings— bless them. Allow their joy to spill over into our lives, inspiring gratitude and joy in each of us.

*Each petition will end with "Lord, in your mercy" and the congregations responds:*

### **C: Hear Our Prayer**

Guiding God, we know that this life of faith is not easy. Even the Magi, those faithful seekers, had to change course. Even the Magi had to go home by another way. So as we journey, bless our wanderings. Bless our path. Walk beside us. Dance beside us. Hang stars in the sky and place a deep knowing in our gut that we simply cannot ignore. And if the road turns into a dead end, grant us the courage to begin again. With hope in our hearts and gratitude in our lungs, we unite our voices together, saying,

**C: Amen**

# Word/Meal

## Standing The Peace

The Peace of the Lord be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

Let us share with one another the Peace.

*The Peace we receive from God we share with others with a handshake, a hug, or a nod, as you feel comfortable.*

## Seated The Offering

### Standing Hymn To Be Known



Re - call the truth that we once knew:  
For in the gar - den God de - clared  
In ev - ery age hu - man - i - ty  
Both you and I are in - ter - twined



We were not made for sol - i - tude  
That our brief lives on earth be shared  
Re - lied on mu - tu - al - i - ty  
The warp and weft of hu - man - kind



We need com - mun - i - ties of faith  
With part - ners, friends, and fam - i - ly  
Our God - breathed spi - rits weren't de - signed  
So please don't try to go a - lone



Where we can feel God's warm em - brace  
Who hold us in our joy and grief  
To be di - vid - ed and con - fined  
Your hu - man heart needs to be known

*For the offering, An usher will pass a plate around for anyone wishing to contribute. Financial support is a spiritual practice for disciples.*



# Meal

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Offering Prayer **C: Amen**

*Standing* The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

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

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy.....

...We praise your name and join in their unending hymn.



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who



comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

# Meal

## Thanksgiving at the Table

Loving God... to pray the prayer as Jesus taught us,

## Lord's Prayer

**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**

## *Seated* 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.

**Communion:** An usher will direct you to the altar. All are welcome at the communion table. If you do not wish to receive Communion, you are welcome to come forward for a blessing. Simply cross your arms over your chest. If you have any questions on communion at Ascension, please feel free to speak with Deacon Ellen.

**Starwords:** Because God uses multiple ways to guide and speak to us, we are inviting you to take a starword from the basket as you return to your seat after you receive Communion. These are words that can be used to set an intention for behavior or awareness for the coming year to help us move closer to Jesus. We will provide opportunities throughout the year to share your experience with your word. You are invited to simply draw a word from the basket and not sorting through and choosing one, you are practicing the spiritual task of receiving. Blessings on this venture for 2025.

# Meal/Sending

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Come to the table ...All are welcome here.

*Seated* Distribution of Communion

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you for evermore.

**C: Amen**

*Standing* Prayer after Communion

Nourishing God, Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place to begin again. We think the world is too far gone. We think we have made too many mistakes. We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.

**C: But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom. We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed. And just like that, we have hope.**

Just like that, we begin again. Thank you for the gift of this fresh start. Thank you for planting hope deep in our bones.

**C: Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and wine to remind us that it's never too late to build your kingdom here.**

We are grateful.

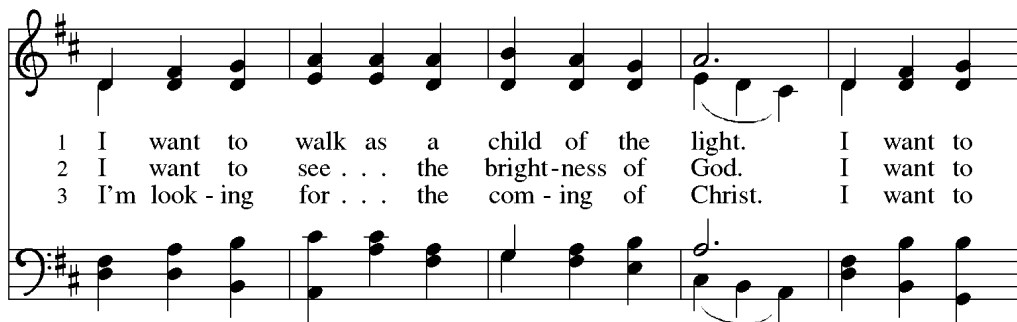
**C: We are so grateful. Amen.**

*Standing* Blessing

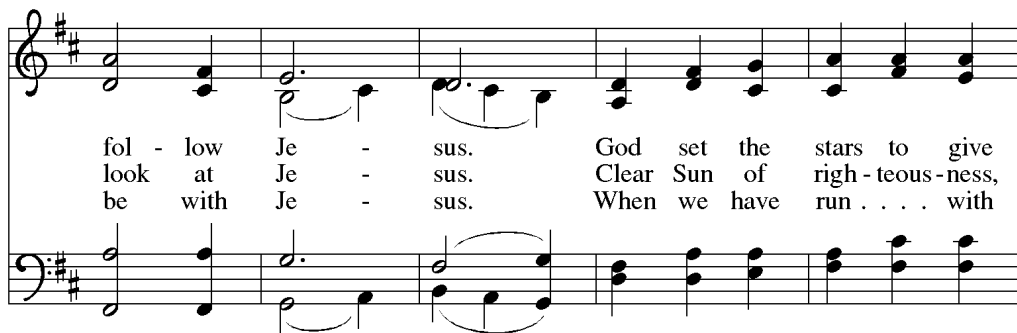
As you leave this place, may you have the wisdom to lean on one another. May you have the courage to hold onto hope, the compassion to do the good that is yours to do, and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing. For in a world full of dead ends, Advent invites us to begin again. So start here. Start now. Start with love and begin again. In the name of Christ, our new beginning, go in peace. **C: Amen.**

# Sending

Standing Hymn 815 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light



1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to  
2 I want to see . . . the bright-ness of God. I want to  
3 I'm look - ing for . . . the com - ing of Christ. I want to



fol - low Je - sus. God set the stars to give  
look at Je - sus. Clear Sun of righ - teous - ness,  
be with Je - sus. When we have run . . . . with



light to the world. The star of my life is Je - sus.  
shine on my path, and show me the way to the Fa - ther.  
pa - tience the race, we shall know the joy of Je - sus.



# Sending

## Refrain

In him there is no dark-ness at all. The night and the

day are both a - like. The Lamb is the light of the

cit - y of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

Dismissal Go in Peace and Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God!**

Postlude



## Prayers & Concerns

- Johnny Hancock, neighbor of David Woodard
- Pastor Clay Seneker
- Laura Jean Myers-Ross, sister of Bonnie Jane Peterson
- Arlene Halverson
- Gene and Sandy Jung

*Our full Member Concerns list can be found in the newsletter.*

## Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event
<b>Friday, Jan 10</b> <b>11:30 AM</b>	Food Forest Coalition Luncheon. See Deacon Ellen for details.
<b>Sunday, Jan 12</b> <b>Following the Service</b>	Council Meeting
<b>Saturday, Jan 18</b> <b>12:00 PM</b>	Vitality Training
<b>Thursday, Jan 23</b> <b>6:00 PM</b>	Growers Guild Dinner



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## Ways to Participate

### Classes & Worship:

- **Sunday Service 11:00 AM**  
Traditional service using the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnal.
- **Bible Study Sunday 10:00 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. It's a join in anytime class.
- **Wednesday night Prayer Service** at 7:00 PM Come away for a time of reflection and renewal with Evening Prayer.

### Worship Volunteers (sign up in the Narthex):

- Readers
- Ushers/Greeters
- Worship Assistants

**Outdoor Food Ministries:** We partner with Hope Community Fridge and others to maintain a free pantry and refrigerated groceries for all.

We need lots of volunteers to make it happen.

- Help stock the pantries and fridge
- Water, weed and harvest in the gardens
- Fridge check-in volunteer

**Welcome Home Chattanooga:** Every few months we get together and bring a meal to Welcome Home Chattanooga. We're always looking for volunteers to help coordinate these meals.

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## Birthdays

1/04 Emmaly Hughes

1/13 Gene Jung

1/28 Lynn Frye

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## Newsletter

We publish a short, weekly newsletter with details on upcoming events, information for next week's services, and other community information.

**Use the QR code to view our latest newsletter and to sign up.**





# Ascension Lutheran Church

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**Deacon Ellen Koester** considers herself a Michigan girl and a Southern woman. She lives with Elmo, her loud and rambunctious canine companion who she is certain is part velociraptor. She came to consider the South her home as she served congregations in Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina. She also served with Lutheran Services in Tennessee. She is a graduate of the University of Dayton in Dayton, OH and Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH. Seeing individuals of all ages grow in their faith and life and helping them discover ways to use their gifts to share God's love are what she loves in ministry. If you are visiting with us today, she would enjoy the opportunity to chat with you.

Deacons in the ELCA are ordained ministers of Word and Service. They serve at the intersection of church and world, bringing a sharper focus to how the church responds to the needs of the people.

To contact Deacon Ellen, call the church office at 423-698-5047 or by email at [office@thisisthefeast.org](mailto:office@thisisthefeast.org).

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Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning | Text: Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783-1872; tr. Jens Christian Aaberg, 1877-1970, alt.; Music: MORNING STAR, James P. Harding, 1850-1911, adapt.

Shine, Jesus, Shine | Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950; Music: Graham Kendrick; Text and music © 1987 Make Way Music, admin. Music Services in the Western Hemisphere.

Go Tell It on the Mountain | Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.; Music: GO TELL IT, African American spiritual

The Road Winds Ever On | Divinum Mysterium 8.7.8.7.8.7.7; Words by Anna Strickland, 2024; Plainsong melody, 12<sup>th</sup> cent.; © Anna Strickland, 2024. Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC.

To Be Known | WALTHAM 8.8.8.8; Words by Anna Strickland, 2004; Music by John Baptiste Calkin, 1872; © Anna Strickland, 2024. Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC.

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light | Text: Kathleen Thomerson, b. 1934; Music: HOUSTON, Kathleen Thomerson; Text and music © 1970, 1975 Celebration

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