



The Olive Branch

December 24, 2025

Sunday Readings

December 28, 2025

*First Sunday of Christmas
year A*

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalm 148

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

January 4, 2026

*Second Sunday of Christmas
year A*

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 14:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1:1-18

Accent on Worship *Bishop's Christmas Message*

In his Christmas message to the church, Bishop Curry delivers a children's sermon, describing the night when Jesus was born. "One silent night, far away in a town called Bethlehem, the stars twinkled brighter than ever. And the angels were there too. It was as if the whole sky was whispering: 'Something wonderful is happening.'"

Have you ever heard a whisper?

"Hello!"

Can you all whisper back to me?

Whispers are quiet, gentle, almost like a secret. You have to lean in close to hear them. And I wonder if it's possible for the heavens to whisper at Christmas?

One silent night, far away, in a town called Bethlehem, the stars twinkled brighter than ever. And the angels were there, too. It was as if the whole sky was whispering: "Something wonderful is happening ..."

Let's all look up at the ceiling like we're looking at the stars.

Can you twinkle your fingers like stars?

Now let's whisper together, "Something wonderful is happening!"

The heavens weren't shouting. They weren't making a big noise.

They were whispering, because whispers make us stop, listen and pay attention.

And what was the whispering about? A baby. A tiny baby lying in a manger. His name was Jesus.

Can you pretend to rock a baby in your arms?

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*In the
presence of God.
Being the
presence of God.*

Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

The night Jesus was born, the shepherds heard the whisper in the sky when the angels sang. The Wise Men sensed the whisper in the star that guided them. And Mary and Joseph felt the whisper in their hearts: "This child is special. This child is God's gift."

Sometimes we think God only speaks in loud voices or through big miracles. But Christmas reminds us that God often whispers. God whispers love and kindness and peace.
Can you think of one kind thing you could whisper to someone this week?

So, this Christmas, listen closely. The heavens are still whispering: "Jesus is here. God loves you. Share that love with the world."

Let's all whisper together: "Jesus is here."
Now say "God loves us" in a joyful voice!
Amen.

*The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Video of this children's sermon available [here](#).

Save the Date: Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments Community Celebration

Please join us in celebrating the opening of the new Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments on **Saturday, January 10 from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm**. Their beautiful new facility is located at 2740 1st Ave. S. in Minneapolis.

Celebrate the opening of the new Simpson Community Shelter & Apartments. Take a self-guided tour, meet the Simpson staff, learn about our programs and explore ways to get involved at Simpson. Light refreshments will be served.

Simpson Housing is one of our Neighborhood Ministry partner organizations, providing vital services to those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Please plan to join us in celebrating the opening of their new facility.

Calendar

Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

4:00 pm *Christmas Eve Eucharist*

9:30 pm Choral Prelude

10:00 pm *Christmas Eve Eucharist*

Thursday, December 26 - Christmas Day

10:00 am *Christmas Day Eucharist*

7:00 pm Narcotics Anonymous

Friday, December 27

Church offices closed

Sunday, December 28 - First Sunday of Christmas

8:00 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed coffee and conversation
No Education Hour this week

10:45 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed coffee and conversation

Monday, December 29

7:00 pm Monday Night WAVE (N.A.)

Tuesday, December 30

Noon Bible Study

Thursday, January 1, 2026 - Name of Jesus

10:00 am *Holy Eucharist for The Name of Jesus*

Friday, January 2

7:00 pm Recovery group

Adult Forums

December 28 and January 4, 2026 - Christmas break, no Forum. Adult Forums resume on January 11, 2026.

Our Going Out and Our Coming In

Jim Bargmann will be out of the office Dec. 22-26 and Dec. 31

Cantor Schwandt will be out of the office Dec. 26-Jan. 1

Cha Posz will be out of the office Dec. 24-Jan. 1

Pastor Crippen will be out of the office Dec. 29-Jan. 1

2025 Contributions

In order to be sure you receive credit for your 2025 tax returns on your contributions statement, please be sure that your year end gifts are in to the church by December 31st.

Tuesday Noon Bible Study Link

The Tuesday Noon Bible Study meets weekly in person in the East Assembly Room. For those who are unable to come in person, the Bible Study is held over Zoom as well.

The link for the Tuesday noon Bible study will be the same every week. To join from your computer, tablet, or smartphone, [click here](#).

Book Discussion

For the first session of the new year on January 10, the group will consider an author new to the group, Niall Williams, as we read *Time of the Child*. On February 14 we'll take one of our rare trips into nonfiction as we read *A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn - The Last Great Battle of the American West*, by James Donivan.

Everyone is invited to join when-ever you are able, at 10 a.m. in the Library, usually on the second Saturday of each month. The group has been using Zoom to provide remote access to the sessions. If you would like to participate in the group, you can either attend the monthly sessions which meet at the church in person or join remotely via Zoom. To join from your computer, tablet, or smart phone, [click here](#).

Winter Wear Needed!

This time of year, Neighborhood Ministry is often asked by our neighbors about warm clothes for those who come to get assistance. If you have any coats, jackets, scarves, gloves/mittens/ or hats to donate, please know we can put them to good use. Drop them off in the coat room adjacent to the kitchenette on the upper level. There is an area marked for coat donations. Mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves can be shared in the bins in the coat room. Thank you!

The Olive Branch Publication Schedule

Please note that there will not be an *Olive Branch* published during the week between Christmas and New Year (no December 31 issue). Regular weekly publication resumes with the January 7, 2026 issue.

Christmas and Epiphany Worship at Mount Olive

Christmas Eve: Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Christmas Eve Eucharist at 4:00 p.m.

Choral Prelude at 9:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Eucharist at 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Day: Thursday, December 25, 2025

Festival Eucharist at 10:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Christmas: December 28, 2025

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Name of Jesus: Thursday, January 1, 2026

Holy Eucharist at 10:00 a.m.

Second Sunday of Christmas: January 4, 2026

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Name of Jesus: Thursday, January 1, 2026

Holy Eucharist at 10:00 a.m.

Epiphany of Our Lord: Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Holy Eucharist at 7:00 p.m.

Baptism of Our Lord: Sunday, January 11, 2026

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Meal Train!

Elizabeth Manning and Kevin Vasquez recently had a baby who will be baptized at Mount Olive. A meal train has been set up for them and members of Mount Olive are invited to sign up to support them if you are able. The meal train starts this month and currently goes through January. Thanks for any support you can provide! Here is the link to the Meal train signup: <https://mealtrain.com/n90g0d>

January Neighborhood Ministries Partner of the Month: *Our Saviour's Community Services*

Our Saviour's Community Services, a non-profit founded by our sister congregation, operates a shelter, which in the last year has served a vital role in providing housing for those experiencing homelessness who have recently been released from the hospital. In addition, they provide transitional housing for women who have experienced domestic abuse and permanent supportive housing for men and women who live with a mental illness, physical disability, and/or substance use disorders. In addition, Mount Olive volunteers provide meals at the Our Saviour's shelter once a month.

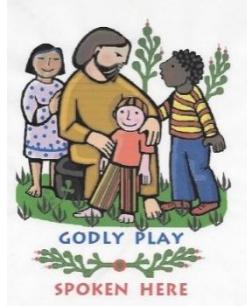
Mount Olive has chosen to support each of our Partners of the Month though a yearly contribution from our budget, and often, like our partner this month, we also volunteer in support of their work. On top of those financial and labor contributions, we encourage any member who wishes to donate over and above our budgeted amount to those partners doing work in their areas of passion and concern. You can do this using your offering envelopes or our online giving system. All additional contributions to our partner of the month will be distributed to the partner for the month in which the contribution is received.

For more information about Our Saviour's work, please visit their website at <https://oscs-mn.org>. For more information about the teams from Mount Olive serving meals at the shelter, contact Elaine Halbardier at ech914@comcast.net.

Godly Play This Week

There will be NO Godly Play on December 28.

All children ages 3-Grade 1 are welcome to Circle One, and children in grades 2-5 are welcome to Circle Two.



Diapason Ensemble presents “Les Muses de Versailles” Sunday, January 4, 2026 at 3:00 pm Mount Olive Lutheran Church

All are invited to experience the elegant sounds of the French Court featuring music by Marais, Lully, Royer, Francoeur, Couperin, and Morel.

Benjamin Lenzmeier, historical violin; Eric Miller, viola da gamba; Sean Kleve, harpsichord

Tickets for this concert may be purchased at the door or [online here](#).



A Little Child Shall Lead Them

This coming Sunday, December 28, the church will commemorate the Holy Innocents, Martyrs, the boys of Bethlehem slaughtered by King Herod, as he sought to eliminate the newborn king whose birth the magi had announced to him.

It's always the children who fare worst when humans engage in what Josef Goebbels called "*Totalkrieg*," Total War. But that's the only kind we moderns seem to know. Whether in Gaza, Ukraine, or Sudan, it is the children who are dying and being maimed and traumatized by the thousands. What's to be done?

That question was a significant motivator for me as I participated in our congregation's recent visitation to Palestine. We do not sit in the councils of the great. But we can—and did—bear witness with our presence that the meek matter. We sought to convey to those whom we met at Dar al-Kalima University, in the village of Battir, and in the Aida Refugee Camp that how they fare is important to us. This is true of no one more fully than of the children.

As we made our way through Bethlehem and its environs, a bit of linguistic trivia came to me with force. Just about everyone—scholars included—holds that the meaning of "Bethlehem" (Hebrew *bēt lehem*) is "house of bread." But there is another possibility, coming from a second root *lhm* in Hebrew. That second root means "war," as in *milhāmâ*, "battle." Historically speaking, I have little doubt that "house of bread" lay at the heart of the name of the "little town." But the reality on the ground now? House of bread or house of war? The jury's still out on that one.

This season and the commemoration to be observed this Sunday remind us that God has a stake in the outcome. God chose to commit to full participation in the fate of the human race as a child—moreover, as a poor child in an occupied land. That child assures us that God is fully with us. God is with us all, but especially with today's children similarly situated.

-- George C. Heider



Upper photo: Expressive mural painted on a concrete wall in the Aida Refugee Camp (Bethlehem). The refugee camp was established in 1950 and is home to Palestinian refugees

Lower photo: Artwork on display in the Walled Off Hotel located in Bethlehem - right next to the Separation Wall

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

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*A congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

Sunday Eucharist: 8 & 10:45 am

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Staff

Pastor – *Joseph Crippen*

Cantor – *Daniel Schwandt*

Vicar – *Erik Nelson*

Administrative Assistant – *Cha Posz*

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry
– *Jim Bargmann*

Sexton – *Jose Morocco*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ
congregation.*

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