

The February 2026 Epistle



A publication of St. James Lutheran Church,
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Dear St. James Family,

MESSAGE from the VICAR

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

In this season after Epiphany we find ourselves in a series of weeks exploring the first teachings of Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel. Last week we heard "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*"

To our ears, the word *repent* has taken on the meaning of feeling really, really sorry for something bad we have done. However, the original meaning of the word *repent* is not just a feeling of being sorry - it's an acceptance to see the world in a different way. It's a total transformation of the way we understand reality and, as a result, how we behave.

I said a lot regarding that theme in my sermon on Sunday, but I'd like to share with you one additional consideration for those of us who want to take the theme of *repentance* seriously, especially as we look ahead to the beginning of Lent this month.

I'll start with this question: If we are to change, what's the difference between where we are now and where we ought to be? This is a question I pray we all ask ourselves. It's worthy of our consideration.

In the United States there is a lot of talk about which Christian views/opinions are the correct ones. There are the so-called "Christian

nationalists” and so-called “progressive Christians” battling out ideas in the public square. The ideas from these two sides are usually opposites and tend to line up with the political parties they prefer. Finding wisdom and clarity from the heart of God can be difficult if we are trying to sound more like Jesus than our preferred news sources - and that includes the TV networks as well as talk radio, podcasts, and the like.

Here’s the consideration I offer to you today. It is hardest to distinguish between two things that sound similar. We can get stuck in the language we use. When words like *freedom* and *justice* get thrown around, we have to step back and ask, “Are they using those words the same way Jesus uses those words?”

When Jesus said, “Follow me,” he was saying, “Get to know me. Do what I do. Love what I love. Behave as I would behave.” **Above all we need to get to know the heart of God by getting to know Jesus and prioritizing what Jesus prioritizes.** That means when Jesus teaches, we pay attention. Closely. And when the talking heads start using words that Jesus uses, we go back to what he taught and compare - critically, at times - what they mean to what Jesus means.

Yes, it is hardest to distinguish between two things that sound similar, but remember: we are not alone in this journey. God gives us his own Spirit to cheer us and to guide us. God gives us counselors, therapists, spiritual directors, pastors, and wise friends to bring insight to our condition. God uses the grace of repentance and the grace of these gifts to transform us in the midst of these confusing times. Praise God for his faithfulness and provision for the journey!

I am eager to celebrate Lent with you all!
Grace and peace to you,
Vicar Bryce Hewlett, SAM

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Happy February, St. James!

I cannot believe that we are already one month into 2026!

What a month we had in January. We started by celebrating Epiphany with an “Around the World” potluck, featuring a variety of dishes from different cultures. The kids got to make Wise Men crowns and participate in a polar plunge outside! Immediately following the celebration, we had an Epiphany service. Both were well attended.

We also had our Annual Meeting on the 25th. I want to thank everyone who was in attendance, and the representatives from each committee who came up and spoke about their committee. I would also like to thank everyone for voting on our changes to the Constitution.

I hope we can continue this year with open hearts, minds, and spirits as we spread the Word of Christ and celebrate all that He has done for us.

Be good. Do good. God bless,

Madeline Schmidt

St. James Lutheran Church Council Members 2026

Name	Phone	Email	Term Ends	Officers	Committee Liaison
Erik Bakken	563-370-5275	ejbakken@mchsi.com	2027	Vice-President	Personnel/ Finance
Glenn Boyles	563-676-5864	glennboyles45@gmail.com	2027		Fellowship/Food Pantry
Shirley Richlen Kelly Crooks	563-949-6545 563-271-6436	srichlen34@gmail.com kwcrooks@msn.com	2028 2027	Secretary	Friendly Visitors/ Worship and Music
Kane Schmidt	563-499-4865	kaneschmidt37@gmail.com	2029		Site Committee
Amanda Southwell	309-350-9079	amandajaynesouthwell@gmail.com	2029		Christian Education
Steve Miller	563-340-6680	millerss412@yahoo.com	2027		Property/ Live Nativity
Madeline Schmidt	563-570-6354	madelineschmidt2016@gmail.com	2028		President
Tom Sladky	563-564-2367	skidbq1@gmail.com	2028		Social Ministry
Troy Larkin	563-370-6270	troylarkin1@msn.com	2029		

ASH WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 18TH

7:00-8:00A.M.

ASHES AND BLESSING AVAILABLE
IN DRIVE-UP FASHION

2:00-6:00P.M.

INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION
-BY APPOINTMENT OR DROP-IN-

The order for individual confession can
be found on page 243 in the ELW.

*³ While I kept silent, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did
not hide my iniquity;
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
(Psalm 32:3-5)*

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray
for each other so that you may be healed.
(James 5:18a)*

7:00P.M.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE WITH
HOLY COMMUNION

LENT

MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES:

Wednesdays during Lent

February 25th

March 4th

March 11th

March 18th

March 25th

6:00 p.m. Meals

Lenten Meals are coordinated by various church committees. Meals are open to all. If you would like to assist in serving these meals, please contact the church office to connect with our Committees at (563)355-4161.

7:00 p.m. Vespers

-Holden Evening Prayer-

Composed by Marty Haugen

2/25, 3/11, 3/25

-Prayer Around the Cross-

3/4, 3/18

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2/3 KEN OSBORN

2/5 KIM HEWLETT

2/7 MAURICIO GARCIA-HOGBIN

2/8 SUSIE SEITZ

2/9 LYNN STERNER

2/14 EMERSON BILEDDO

2/14 JERYL ANN KRUMBHOLZ

2/14 KANE SCHMIDT

2/15 DON URBATSCH

2/18 INDIGO BOYLES

2/22 ANGIE SCHMIDT

2/24 DEB CROOKS

2/28 RON MEKALSON

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

2/15 STEVE & MARILYN PIEART

2/28 RON AND LISA MEKALSON

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9AM Worship 10AM Friendly Visitors	4PM Social Ministry Mtg. 6-7:30PM Bible Study		6-8PM Food Pantry 6-8PM Confirmation	9-11AM Food Pantry 11AM Service at BHCC		5PM Saturday Service
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9AM Worship 10AM Coffee & Convo	1PM Finance Mtg. 6-7:30PM Bible Study	4PM Property Mtg.	6-8PM Food Pantry 6-8PM Confirmation	9-11AM Food Pantry		8AM Men's Prayer Breakfast 5PM Saturday Service
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
9AM Worship 10AM Council Mtg.		1PM Sarah Circle	7-8AM Ashes & Blessing 2-6PM Individual Confession 7PM Ash Wednesday Service 6-8PM Food Pantry	9-11AM Food Pantry 11AM Service at BHCC 11:30AM GANG 2:30PM Bingo @ BHCC		5PM Saturday Service
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
9AM Worship		12-4PM Quilting	6-8PM Food Pantry 6PM Lenten Meal 7PM Service	9-11AM Food Pantry		5PM Saturday Service



Happy
Valentine's
Day!



Flower Chart 2026

Flowers for the altar are \$50 per week (2 bouquets), and we prefer payment at the time of sign up. Two members may wish to sign up together and share the cost of the 2 bouquets. Checks are made out to St. James with "altar flowers" written in the memo. Members are encouraged to include their special occasion (anniversary, memory of loved ones, etc.) and to take their flowers home after the service. The Flower Chart is located in the narthex or you may call the church office to sign up.



Sarah Circle is scheduled to meet Tuesday, February 17th from 1:00-3:30 p.m.



From the Quilt Block

February 2026

There is a basket in the narthex containing quilt kits. If you would like to help with this ministry and have a sewing machine, you can pick up one or more of the kits supplied, take it/them home and, at your leisure, sew the strips together with ½ inch seam allowances. Return the finished tops to the office at church and look for your tops in finished quilts on the quilt rack in the Narthex.

St James quilters are back at it after a break. No quilts were made in November or December because of our quilt days being so close to Thanksgiving and Christmas. In January, 5 Quilters completed 2 quilts.

Our next quilt day will be February 24th from noon to 4:00 pm.

Starting February 22 (the first Sunday after Ash Wednesday) WELCA will be collecting supplies for Personal Care Kits:

- 1 light weight Bath size towel (20"x40" to 27"x52)
- 2-3 Bath size bars of soap totaling 8-9 Ounces in original wrapping
- 1 Adult size toothbrush in original wrapping Multi packs are accepted
- 1 metal nail clippers (Attached file Optional)

- We still have combs left from our last collection.

Please donate only the items listed. Thank you!

Pieces be with you,

Shirley Richlen



Social Ministry News

Social Ministry met on January 5th. We discussed the meal at the Zion meal site – that was on January 26th – we're so happy to announce we served 103 meals! We are scheduled to serve on March 23rd.

Since we do not serve a meal on Memorial Day (May), we decided to add another date – Wednesday April 22nd.

We are always looking for folks willing to bake cookies for these meals. Please contact Judy Larson at 563-340-7902 if you are able to help.

We also discussed the giving tree and how amazed we are at the generosity of this congregation.

We will be playing Bingo with the folks at Bettendorf Health Care on February 19th. They enjoy winning prizes of quarters and small stuffed animals.

February Worship Assistants

Date	Assisting Minister	Reader	Acolyte	Usher	Usher	Altar Guild	Altar Guild
2/1/2026	Judie Brooks	Justina Pessen	Eli Pessein	Pat Larson	Shirley Richlen	Pat Larson	
2/8/26	Tom Sladky	Ellen Hogbin	Jude Hewlett	Fritz Voss	Judy Larson	Marilyn Pieart	Diana Worley
Transfiguration 2/15/26	Pat Larson	Judie Brooks	Edi Southwell	Ann Larson	Dee Worley	Marilyn Pieart	Diana Worley
Ash Wednesday 2/18/2026	Jason Forari	Maddie Schmidt		Anna Forari	Melissa Forari	Shirley Richlen	Judie Brooks
2/22/2026	Ellen Hogbin	Judy Larson	Velvet Collison	Kelly Crooks	Ryan Martin	Shirley Richlen	Judie Brooks

*Please Note: If you find you cannot serve on the date/time scheduled, please arrange for your replacement, then **call or email your scheduler** to advise the name of your replacement. Your gracious cooperation is very much appreciated! Thanks!*

Schedulers

Altar Guild: Mary Meumann (563)355-7138; marybusdvr@gmail.com

Ushers & Assisting Ministers:

Madlyn Wolgaert; stjamesbett@gmail.com

Children's Team: Kim Hewlett (856)296-1023;
kimhewlett18@gmail.com

Counters: Maddie Schmidt (563)570-6354;
madelineschmidt2016@gmail.com

Prayers for Healing and Support

Congregational Members

Ed Arp, **Lynn** Chamberlain, **Bev** Chappen, **Sandy** Henry, **Frieda** Houldsworth, **Jeryl** Krumbholz, **Jim** Krumbholz,
Doug Larson, **Bert** Leder, **LaVonne** Mienke, **Mark** Peters, **Jean** Rowe

Family and Friends

Amanda (friend of Melissa),
Annette & Rick (Steve & Sue Miller & Pat Sorenson's sister
& brother-in-law),
Becky (sister of Ellen Hogbin)
Carol (friend of Steve & Sue Miller)
Crew (Susie and Jeff Seitz' new grandson), **Donna** (Ed Arp's sister),
Drew (Pat Larson's friend), **Emmett** (friend of Diana Worley),
Hattie (Frieda's sister), **Joe** (Janene's son-in-law), **Karen and Ed** (Shirley's
Aunt and Uncle), **Konnor** (Bert Leder's grandson), **Mark** (friend of Jason
Forari), **Megan** (friend of Deb Crooks), **Michelle** (friend of Joleen & Erik
Bakken), **Phil** (Steve Miller and Pat Sorensen's brother), **Stan** (relative of
Fritz Voss), **Stella** (friend of Ellen Hogbin), **Steve** (friend of Pat Larson),
Tami (family of Maggie Bayliss), **Wally** (Frieda's nephew)

Those Whose Duty it is to Protect Others

Anthony Karasek (Judy Larson's great nephew)
LT. **Chris** Tribble USN (Erik & Joleen Bakken's friend).
CPT **Eli** Smith (Jerry and Myrna Mattly's grandson)
Nathan Pearson USAF (Jenna & Kane Schmidt's friend)
Tyler McLaughlin, First Responder (Family of Pat Larson)

*If you have anyone who needs to be taken off or added,
please notify the church office.*