



The PresbyRecord

A community beacon of faith, love and hope.

Volume LX Issue 1

January 2026

Epiphany

Epiphany celebrates the light of Jesus Christ shining into the world, a light that continues to guide us long after the glow of Christmas has faded. Observed in the Western church on January 6, the name comes from the Greek *epiphaneia*, meaning “appearance” or “manifestation.” At its heart, Epiphany proclaims that God does not remain hidden or distant but chooses to be revealed—made visible—in Jesus Christ. The visit of the Magi, often called Three Kings Day, is the central story in the West: wise travelers from distant lands who recognize in the Christ Child the presence of God. Their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh symbolize Jesus’ kingship, divinity, and sacrificial love. In many Christian traditions, Christmas does not end on December 25 but continues for twelve days, culminating in Epiphany, the moment when

Christ is shown to the nations.

Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feast days, honored in both Eastern and Western churches. Western Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25 and Epiphany on January 6, focusing on the Magi’s journey. Eastern Orthodox Christians follow the Julian calendar, celebrating Christmas on January 7 and Epiphany on January 19, with a strong emphasis on Jesus’ baptism. In the East, the baptism of Christ is understood as a profound revelation of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—made manifest in the waters of the Jordan. Whether through the Magi, the baptism, or the first miracle at Cana, Epiphany affirms a central Christian conviction: that God’s glory is not confined to heaven but breaks into the world in ways that invite recognition, wonder, and response.

The religious philosophy of Epiphany is rooted in the belief that God’s revelation is universal. The Magi come from far beyond Israel, representing the nations of the world. Their journey suggests that God’s light reaches across cultures, languages, and borders, drawing all people toward Christ. Epiphany teaches that faith is not limited to one people or place; it is a gift meant for the whole world. It also reminds us that God often appears in unexpected ways—in a humble child, in ordinary water, in a simple wedding feast—inviting us to look for the holy in the everyday. The season of Epiphany, which continues until Ash Wednesday in many churches, encourages Christians to pay attention to the ways Christ is revealed in our own lives: in acts of compassion, in moments of clarity, in the quiet leading of the Spirit.

Around the world, Epiphany and Three Kings Day are celebrated with customs that reflect this universal reach of God’s revelation. In Puerto Rico, children prepare for the Magi by filling a small box with grass or hay for the kings’ camels and placing it under their beds, hoping to receive gifts in return. In Mexico, families gather to share *rosca de reyes*, a ring-shaped sweet bread with a tiny hidden figurine baked inside; the person who finds it is said to receive a blessing of good fortune. Across Spain, the evening before Epiphany brings grand parades called *Cabalgata de Reyes*, filled with floats, music, and candy tossed to cheering crowds. In Belgium, Poland, and Portugal, children dress as the Magi and go door-to-door singing songs and receiving treats or coins, echoing the joy and generosity of the kings’ journey.

In Greece, Epiphany centers on the Great Blessing of Waters. A priest throws a cross into the sea, and swimmers race to retrieve it as a sign of blessing and renewal. Russia observes Epiphany on January 19 with icy plunges into lakes or rivers, where worshippers dip themselves three times in remembrance of

Jesus' baptism and the Holy Trinity. In Austria and Germany, families take part in the tradition of "chalking the door," writing a blessing such as 20~C~M~B~26 above their doorway. The letters recall the names of the Magi and also stand for a Latin prayer asking Christ to bless the home in the coming year. These diverse celebrations—whether joyful parades, shared meals, songs at the doorstep, or blessings over water and home—express the same theological truth: Epiphany proclaims that Christ is revealed not only to a few but to the whole world. The light that guided the Magi still shines, calling people of every culture and generation to recognize God's presence, to follow where Christ leads, and to reflect that light in their own lives.

A Prayer for the Feast of the Epiphany

*I wonder sometimes
If one of the stars that lit Abraham's night
Was the one that led the Magi to Jesus.
A dark canvas speckled by the most generous brush—
What an improbable promise to an old man.
But our God has never been daunted by the unlikely, the impossible.
What a sight for the Magi, too,
A baby resting on hay, his cries mingled with braying and bleating.
I like to think they heard in those everyday sounds a holy chorus,
Saw in that noisy tableau a Creator serenaded by His creation,
All of it embodied, enfleshed—
All of it good.
And when we've left our gifts for this implausible King,
May we, like the Magi, go home by another way—
Having encountered the holy,
May we protect it, guard it,
Trail its light behind us wherever we go.
A sacred arc transposed from heaven to earth,
May we ourselves become the star,
Leading the way to Emmanuel.*

Amen.



Communion Servers

January 4th

Kristi Sutphin - Set Up
Jack Rogers - Server
Valerie Wade - Server

March 1st

Wanda Bowman - Set Up
Jennifer Burgess - Server
Buck Ivey - Server

Hgdt wct { '3uv

Mcj { 'J "/"Ugv'Wr "
F cxg"J ctxg{ "/"Ugtxgt"
Mcj nggp'Lqtf cp"/"Ugtxgr

Liturgists

January 4th	Valerie Wade
January 11th	Adam Greathouse
January 18th	Raven Lanham
January 25th	Holly Greathouse
February 1st	Kathleen Jordan
February 8th	Buck Ivey
February 15th	Kathryn Maddy
February 22nd	Dave Harvey

In Care Facilities:

Ann McCormick, Apt.106, English Meadows, 5 Bexley Dr, Scott Depot, WV 25560
Sadie Ashworth, 5 Rolling Meadows Dr., Room 118, Scott Depot, WV 25560

Prayer Concerns Congregation Members:

Mark Curtis	Mike Harshbarger
Kensie McComas	John Jones
Ellie Malcomb	Alex Dayfield
Carolyn Reed	Mike Merguc

Military

Captain Allie Curtis, US. Army (United States)
Hunter Parsons, U.S. Navy (Virginia)
Mickey Swartz, Aircrew Flight Equipment Technician, U.S. Air Force (Eugene, Oregon)
Lieutenant Jack Wiles, U.S. Air Force
PFC Joseph Sutphin, US Army
Master Sergeant Robert Maddy (Deployed)

January Birthdays

2 – Dustin Resler
4 – Marion Moir, Felicia Stewart Hoyle
8 – Kristi Sutphin
9 – Laurie Turley, Pam Ferrell
10 – Sally Noble
12 – Tara Malcomb
13 – Wanda Bowman
16 – Pat White
18 – Hunter Parsons, Raven Lanham
19 – Jon Holstein
21 – Ann McCormick, Olivia Hedrick
26 – Steve Leftwich, Cassie Denison, Paul Romine, Jazmine Combs, Bill Graham
28 – Tyler Walker

Prayer Concerns - Family and Friends

Ashley Nestman, Lymphoma (Connie Ivey)
Victoria Reynolds (Wanda Bowman)
Flo Rogers (Jack's wife & Raven's mom) health complications
Jason Haught, complications from spinal surgery (Vickie Haught's son, Jack Rogers' nephew)
Brett and Linda Foster, glioblastoma (Laurie's nephew and his wife)
Kate Lichtenfels, cancer and a safe journey home (Kathryn Maddy's niece)
Jason Turley, major health concerns (Laurie's son and Holly's brother)
Matt Waldie, lung cancer (Kathleen Jordan's friend)
Mark Cunningham, brain cancer (Abbie Burch's brother)
Mary Jo Swartz, health problems (Kathi Curtis)
Annette Burns, liver issues (Ann McCormick)
Sharon Peterson's parents, Decision-making for long term care
Angie Saunders, pancreatic cancer (Raven's Cousin)
The Family of Cel Jones, loss of Cel

Highlights of December Stated Session Minutes

- Meeting was opened with prayer at 6:00 pm.
- Approved November Session Minutes and called email December 14.
- Received Treasurer's report as presented.
- Noted Pastor Transitional meeting with Teays Valley Presbyterian church, January 5, 6:00 pm at Teays Valley.
- Set Annual Congregational meeting for Sunday, February 1, 2026 following worship.
- Approved communion for the first Sunday of every month in 2026 and on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.
- Officer Nominating Committee is preparing a slate of officers for the class of 2028.
- Stewardship letter and commitment card will be sent out soon.
- Next Presbytery meeting will be Saturday, February 21, 2026, location to be announced.
- Next Stated Session meeting will be Tuesday, January 20th, 6 pm.

Facilities Committee

The Facilities Committee did not meet in December, but their work throughout the year has continued behind the scenes. You'll find a full recap of their 2025 projects and progress in the upcoming Annual Report.

Littles Story Time Team

by Donna Merguc, Coordinator

We had a great turnout and lots of fun at our Christmas party which included a visit from Santa Kirk. Santa gave the children a 'Night Before Christmas' book, Santa/Snowman ornament and candy canes and chocolates. We wish all of you a Happy and Blessed New Year. We return to Littles, Friday, January 9 at 10:30am. We can't wait to see their smiling faces!

Oxo Fresh Carpet Cleaner cleaned the Nursery carpet on December 30th. They did a fine job. Stop by and take a look. The little ones will start their new year off with a clean and fresh carpet.

We would love to have you be a part of the Littles' Team. We do have a great time reading, making crafts and preparing snacks for the children.





PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to:
nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study,
support the mission of the church worldwide, work for justice and peace, and build an inclusive, caring
community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of
God's kingdom.

Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, *Wrapping Up Christmas with an Epiphany* is our topic in the adult Bible study. You may want to read the following scriptures ahead of time: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14, Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12, John 1:1-18, Ephesians 1:3-14, and 3:1-12.

Women's Lunch Gathering

Women of the church are invited to gather at 11:45am for lunch and fellowship Friday, January 9 (weather permitting) at Shuckers on Olde Main. Please RSVP if you can join us by calling Kathryn at (304)539-2573. Everyone is welcome!

Circle Bible Study

Our circle Bible studies are scheduled on Tuesday, January 13 at 7:00 pm on Zoom, and in person on Wednesday, January 14 at noon in the church fellowship hall.

We are on lesson five, "The Gift of the Woman Who Was Poor," this month. We are now midway through our Horizons Bible study for 2025-2026, *Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Christ*, by the Rev. Dr. Rhashelle D. Hunter. This short story from the Gospel of Mark packs quite a punch, landing us at the crossroads of joy and gratitude, as well as generosity and justice. Join us ~ no need to read the study book. All are welcome.

Daytime Bible study meets Wednesday, January 14 at 12:00 noon in person for table fellowship. Bring your own brown bag lunch. At 12:35 pm we begin the Bible study and conclude promptly at 1:30 pm.

Evening Zoom Bible study meets on Tuesday, January 13 at 7:00 pm. The zoom will open at 6:45 for early birds to fellowship.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85861031680?pwd=Nw4SR3CIr969qxLdwY9avWaru3wiai.1>

Meeting ID: 858 6103 1680

Passcode: 406332

Christmas Food Baskets

December 20, 2025 was a magical day in St. Albans when several churches in our community distributed Christmas food baskets to many of our neighbors. Among those, of course, was First Presby who again came together to donate food and money to provide generous boxes of food which included a spiral ham and abundant fresh produce to 48 families. The weather was a typical December day with pleasant seasonal temperatures free from snow and rain.

It “takes a village” to pull off this annual event. This year many of our faithful members showed up to help, several of whom showed up on multiple days to pick up the food and deliver it to the church, pack the boxes and distribute the boxes at the church or through delivery. Those included Mel and Abbie Burch, Adam, Holly, Olivia and Eva Greathouse, David Harvey, Buck and Connie Ivey, Kathleen Jordan, Sara Kell, Raven Lanham, Michael Maddy, Regina Dayfield and grandson Braxton Hoylman, Tony Dayfield, Mike Merguc, Andi Pease, Sarah Roberts, Jack Rogers and Kristi Sutphin. Also helping on Friday to sort and bag the produce were one of Olivia’s friends, Eliana Johnson, and her grandfather, Mama Bell.

It was a true pleasure having the youth participate and work so hard. Eva helped Abbie with checking people in and eventually doing it on her own while Olivia and Braxton scurried carrying bags of perishables to the cars to hand to the recipients. Never fear.... we have a generation of great workers and worshipers among us!

We owe Denny and Patsy Denison special thanks for their generous donation of fresh produce which is the most favored part of the baskets. The recipients are grateful for the boxes of staples and the protein but their eyes light up when they see the produce. We also appreciate the donation by UHaul to provide half of the boxes we used.

Thank you, fellow parishioners! You never fail to show up when needed!

-Jennifer Burgess



In Memory of Cel Jones

We thank God for the life and faith of Cel Jones, whose steadfast devotion and Christ-centered compassion blessed our congregation. We trust she now rests in the eternal peace of our Lord, and we pray her memory strengthens our faith and comforts all who loved her.





Higiene for Children in Foster Care Drive

Donate full-size products to your local CASA office!

Shampoo
Body Wash
Deodorant
Feminine Hygiene

westernregionalcasa@teamwv.org



Blessing Bag Needs

Socks – for men
and women



Every donation
helps bring
comfort and
care to someone
in our
community.

Thank you!

Please leave all donations
on the stage



Family Bible Study and Dinner

EVERY WEDNESDAY
AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OF ST. ALBANS

201 Kanawha Terrace

304-727-2241

EVERYONE IS WELCOME
RETURNS JAN 7TH 2026



Classes for
all ages!

Learn about God
through stories,
science,
crafts and more!

PERU



1/25 Travel Talk on Peru

Kathy Weed will present on her recent trip to Peru after the 1/25 congregational meeting.

"The Many Faces of Peru" will feature stories and pictures from her time boating on the Amazon, hiking up Machu Picchu in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, and touring the vibrant city of Cusco. Traveling on planes, trains, buses, and boats, Kathy got to spend two wonderful weeks in this incredible country. Come and hear about fishing for piranha, walking the squares of colonial Lima, riding white-knuckled on tuk-tuks, eating traditional Peruvian food, and more.

First Presbyterian Church
201 Kanawha Terrace
St. Albans, WV 25177

Anyone desiring to have articles,
information, or announcements
included in the February Presby
Record will need to submit that
information by January 28th.
Thank you.

Trustees

Class of 2025: Buck Ivey
Class of 2026: Holly Greathouse
Class of 2027: Dewitt Bowman

Officers

Class of 2025

Dave Harvey (1)
Adam Greathouse (1)
Buck Ivey (1)

Class of 2026

Kathleen Jordan (2)
Valerie Wade (2)
Kristi Sutphin (1)

Class of 2027

Jennifer Burgess (1)
Kathy Harrah (1)
Jack Rogers (2)

Church Staff

Ministers.....	Every Member of the Congregation
Pastor	
Administrative Assistant.....	Raven Lanham
Custodian	Jennifer Gil & Mike Merguc
Musician.....	N. David Stern
Treasurer	Buck Ivey
Tech Team	Dave&Wendy Harvey, Betty King, Logan Roberts

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