

# Portalight



the monthly Newsletter of West Portal Lutheran Church and School

JANUARY 2026

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## West Portal Lutheran Church Website:

[westportallutheran.org](http://westportallutheran.org)

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### From Pastor Binz

#### There is a Season

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" Ecc. 3:1.*

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that everything is in God's timing and purpose and there is a season for all things. *"A time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" Ecc. 3:4.*

God's purpose doesn't always align with what we think may be best, but we need to trust God's timing and planning in all matters under heaven. In the Lord's prayer we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Actually this should give us comfort knowing that God is in control even when things don't go our way.

There is a season and as a pastor our calling is to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" 2 Timothy 4:2. As Christians there are going to be different seasons. After the



season of Christmas we enter into the season of Epiphany, the manifestation of our Lord and the wise men bringing gifts following the star to our LORD. And then the baptism of our LORD and then later in winter the season of Lent and eventually Easter.

There are personal seasons in our life when our vocations change and events happen in life sometimes expected, sometimes unexpected. But God is always with us. My wife and I are entering a new season of retirement but I've learned over the years that God will always have something for us to do in His kingdom. Sharing His word,

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

praying for one another, loving one another and reaching out to those who haven't yet heard the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus our LORD and Savior.

As I enter into retirement I want to make sure everyone knows that our church protocols are such that I will not be able to do any baptisms, weddings, or funerals, that will be the role of the pastor(s) at West Portal Lutheran Church and School.

I will miss everyone dearly and you will all be in my prayers and when it's the season to enter into eternal glory (the church triumphant) we can all be confident by the grace of God through faith the eternal season of heaven will be ours. In the meantime we serve and "*let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith*" Galatians 6:9-10.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Binz

## LET US PRAY TO THE LORD

**GOD** for those who are ill, home-bound, or recovering from recent hospitalization: Dick Bass, Elfriede Bonfert; Charlene



Bruggemann-Wong; Angie Cheung, Helen Bok's sister-in-law; Margaret Choun, Elissa Choun's mother; Bill Eves, Virginia Ferry's cousin; Virginia Ferry; Jimmy Fong, Evelyn Fong's father; Gilbert Mogyorossy; Bennette Nulph; Sigrid Rogge; Ruth Stresow; Ray Toloski; Nancy Tso; Elise Wen, Patrick Man's friend; Cheryl Wong; Marilyn Wong; Franklin Yee.



Our dear sister in Christ, Effie Randall, fell asleep in the Lord on December 4th, 2025. She now rests from all her labor in the fellowship of Christ and the faithful who went before her. A Christian funeral will be held for her in the sanctuary on **Thursday, January 29th at 10:30 a.m.** All are invited to attend: to give thanks to God for the forgiveness of sins and His promise of eternal life, and to join for a time of fellowship and food afterward.

Pastor Jacob Swenson

# PortaLight is the monthly Newsletter of West Portal Lutheran Church and School

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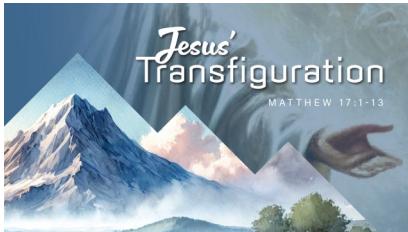
Rev. Curtis Binz, Senior Pastor  
Rev. Jacob Swenson, Associate Pastor  
May Luu, Administrative Assistant  
Angie Holt, Church Secretary, PortaLight Editor  
Sherise Lee, Principal  
Amy Kao, Music Director

## Worship Schedule

**5:00 PM Saturday Worship Service-Lord's Supper**  
**9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary**  
**9:00 AM Sunday Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall**  
**10:00 AM Sunday Worship Service-Lord's Supper**

## Thoughts From Pastor Swenson

**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5 NKJV)**



When we think of busy months in the Church Year, we tend to quickly think of December, first, and then whichever months Lent and Holy Week are in. These months are spiritually and physically demanding both on pastors and lay people. They are demanding in a good way. It is a good spiritual (and life) discipline to set aside extra time during these periods to hear God's Word and be around His people. But January, also, is a busy month - liturgically speaking.

It is not so much the physical rigor, although we do have one bonus service this month - our **Epiphany service on January 6th (7 p.m.)**. There is a spiritual rigor to January, the Sundays following Christmas, that sometimes flies under our radar. We begin the month still in the time of Christmas. This year we get a *second* Sunday after Christmas. After that comes quickly the Epiphany. These are spiritual high points. We confess these Sundays that the eternal God, the creator of the heavens and earth, has come in the flesh. He has come into His creation to save us. Never in the history of the creation has there been anything as profound as this.

The joy of our Lord's birth and Epiphany carries into an Epiphany season. We hear of our Lord's Baptism, where the Father Himself speaks to us. We hear of the Lord's first miracle - water into wine. The Epiphany season celebrates that the man, Jesus, is also the true God. The Sundays after Epiphany end with our Lord's Transfiguration, which will be on January 25th. The Transfiguration is when our Lord's appearance

changes to be bright as light, and God the Father speaks to us again - the words at the top of this article.

At the Transfiguration, we receive a glimpse of our Lord's resurrected and eternal glory, but, as St. Peter finds out, that glory will only come after the suffering of the cross. Here is where the spiritual rigor comes in. This idea - glory after suffering - is already present at the beginning of the month. The Holy Family had to flee to Egypt to escape King Herod's anger. The Magi had to return home another way. After our Lord's Baptism, He was immediately led out into the desert to withstand temptation for us. Even at the wedding in Cana, we confess that earthly happiness is not lasting. **"But be of good cheer,"** Jesus says. **"I have overcome the world."** (John 16:33)

So, too, do our lives often match this pattern. We know what glory awaits us, but we have suffering now. Take heart, Jesus says, for He has made an end to our suffering through His own. By His life, His death, and resurrection, He has reconciled you to the Father in the forgiveness of sins. He has prepared a place for you in heaven. Through the one Man - God and man - you have hope. I invite you to join me this month to be refreshed in strength and hope.

Lastly, let us all together give thanks to God for the ministry of Pastor Binz, both among us and in the congregations previously under his care. The Lord has caused him to be a blessing to us and has blessed us through his ministry. **"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."** (1 Timothy 5:17)

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Swenson

## West Portal Lutheran Church Events



We welcomed Tabitha Joy, daughter of Pastor Swenson and Faith, through the waters of holy baptism. Pastor Jacob Swenson, Associate Pastor, officiated the service on December 14, 2025. Godparents: Gary & Chrissy Nelson and Caitlin Ramirez

Faith Swenson's parents:  
Reverend David Fretham  
and mother Darlene



Pastor Swenson's family  
and brother David

We welcomed Nerriah and Aria, daughters of Franklin and Christina Perez, through the waters of holy baptism. Their godmother is Marcella Dorr (WPL member). Pastor Binz officiated the service on December 7, 2025.



We welcomed Adam, son Joseph Man and Phuong Cooc, through the waters of holy baptism. Pastor Swenson officiated the service on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2025

**Pastor Binz's Retirement Dinner with the Elders, Pastor Swenson & Families**

**WPLS Christmas Carols Service on Nov. 9, 2025: Amy Kao, Music Director, K1 Class, Children & Adult Choirs**



# West Portal Lutheran School:

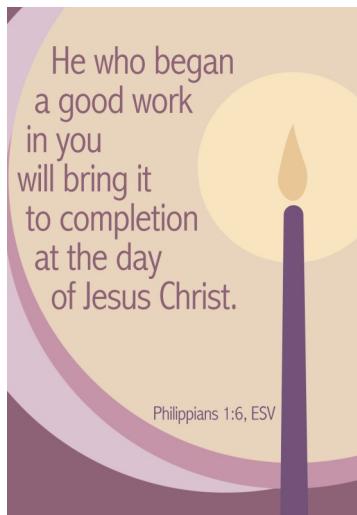
# News from the Principal's Desk

Dear West Portal Lutheran Family of Faith:

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*  
(Philippians 1:6)

The joyful voices of our children at our Christmas program are still near to my heart and memory as I write at the beginning of this new year 2026. I'm reminded that the joy our Savior brings is not confined to the holiday season - it is a deep, abiding joy that accompanies us into the new year. Yet this joy can feel inaccessible when all the merriment disappears, and the dailyness of our routines begin anew. As we strive together to make a joyful noise unto the Lord into the second half of the school year, my prayer is that together we continue to *sing, sing of the joy that Jesus brings*. There is no greater joy than in a Savior who has come to earth, lived our humanity, died for our sins, and rose again in victory.

The new year also often stirs certain predictions of what may come. While our human foresight is limited, what we know by faith in Scripture is that the God who "began a good work in you will continue it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." That assurance gives us great confidence and even resilience as we look to the second half of our school year and the continued growth of our



children. Resilience is also a theme that we will engage with our children in the month of January as we remind ourselves that not only do we find joy in the Lord, but we also find strength that He has overcome the world.

At the start of this new year we also say a fond farewell to Pastor Binz as he retires from West Portal Lutheran Church and School after 9 years of service. We are immensely grateful for his enduring labor of shepherding and teaching the flock. We trust that the many seeds that have been sown through his faithful ministry in the Word will continue to bear much fruit in the years to come. At the same time, his presence will be dearly missed - it is not easy to see a dear servant depart, but we trust that Pastor Binz, like the rest of our community, in faith believes that "he who began a good work in you will continue it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Thank you, Pastor Binz!

Joy in Christ,  
Sherise Lee, School Principal



Lamb's Choir sings at Sunset Campus Chapel,



Kindergarten letter boards showing us they can put together a whole sentence!

## West Portal Lutheran School Events

PTL Christmas Faire 12-13-25. Thank you PTL for a job well done!



The Swenson's family!



## *West Portal Lutheran School Events*

### **Kindergarten - 8th Grade Christmas Program on Dec. 18, 2025**

Pre-Concert Handbell Performance conducted by Dr. Florence Fong



**Kindergarten to 3rd Grades**



**4th - 8th Grades**



**Special thanks to Mrs. Janet Lee, Music Director; Mrs. Florence Fong, Orchestra Director; Sherise Lee, Principal; John Doing, Drummer; Cindy Zhou, Pianist; and WPL Staff & Faculty**



8th Graders-Ava & Evelyn sang "What Child Is This?"





Pictured here: **WPLS Class of 1996** had their 30th Reunion on December 21, 2025 at their Alma Mater's Fellowship Hall! Twenty Alumni from WPL's Class of 1996 are standing with their former Social Studies Teacher, now retired Mr. Daniel Holt, Principal Sherise Lee '92 & Alumni Outreach Coordinator, Beatrice Ammann Priest '90. Many Alumni were accompanied by their spouses and their children with 40 total in attendance. 1996 Classmates Nisha Gurbuxani, Stephanie Gee, and Marisa Louie coordinated the details of this wonderful Reunion, decorated the Fellowship Hall, and provided hors d'oeuvres, catered hot dishes, and salads, for all to savor, while everyone enjoyed mingling! Children even had a separate space towards the rear of the Fellowship Hall filled with crafts and games, while enjoying veggies and pizza!



## Christmas Poinsettias

**T**he Chancel Flowers - white poinsettias were given to the glory of God by **Guthrie, Twomey and Crouse Families** in memory of Margaret and Jim Finley, Jr, beloved parents; Frieda and Robert Thomson; James Sr. and Evelyn Finley; Priscilla, Ben and Barry Mathis; and in honor of WPL Church and School staff and families.

*"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1*

**Christmas Poinsettias** that adorn our Church this Christmas Eve and Day were given to the glory of God for the great gift of His love, Jesus Christ, by the following:

### **The Ammann & Priest Families**

In memory of those family & friends we lost this year, 2025:

Nella Tanzi, Hanny Heim, Gustav Erpen, Alex Steiner, Christoph Buchbender

In memory of those we lost these past 2 decades: Ennio Falcioni, Joseph Priest, Hans Weder

### **Gerda Beisel & Family**

In loving memory of Julius Beisel

### **Pastor & Stacey Binz**

In loving memory of Stacey's sister - Michele Cottle

### **Antonella Demartini, Israel Frayle, Alessia Frayle**

In memory of Joseph Demartini and Gilda Demartini

### **Rudy & Gail Frey**

To the glory of God

### **Darlene Hartman**

In honor of WPL Choir

### **John Hoch & Elissa Choun**

In honor of Margaret Okhi Choun

### **May Luu**

In loving memory of my family & friend I lost this year: My brother Tung Lau and

Rev. David Chan

### **The Man Family**

In honor of Pastor Binz's retirement

### **John Rixe**

In memory of Jan Lundquist

**Amy Hartman Roe**

In honor of my mother Darlene Hartman for her dedicated years of service at WPL Church. Many thanks to Pastor Binz and His wife, Stacey for 9 years of love and service to WPL Church

**Rhonda Short**

In memory of Effie Randall

**Stanley & Julia Tom**

In memory of Margaret Finley

**Tom & Georgeanne Wedergren**

In honor of our son Ian Wedergren

**Justin & Katie Wood**

In honor of our grammy, Linda Silveria

**Steve & Christy Wood**

In memory of our grandparents Phyllis and Bill Silveira, Wintress & Chet Johnson

**The Wood Family**

In memory of Les Morris, Margaret Finley & Laureen Wudy

**M**any thanks to our Altar Guild; our Greeters, Ushers, Elders, and Lectors; Church Office Secretaries May Luu and Angie Holt; Office Helpers; Christian Service Committee; Coffee Hour Fellowship Providers; Christmas Church Decorators; those who set up the outdoor nativity; and others for their extra assistance this Advent/Christmas and to anyone else whom we accidentally forgot, **"Many Thanks!"**

- Pastor Binz & Pastor Swenson

**A Word From the Church Council**

As we celebrate the real miracle of Christmas – God's demonstration of love for us through the Lord Jesus Christ – we also thank Him for the many blessing He has given to this congregation. We are especially grateful for the ministry of Pastor Binz, Pastor Swenson, Principal Sherise Lee, the church office staff, and the faculty and staff of the School, for their commitment to serving the Lord. We appreciate the officers, directors, and volunteers who use the gifts God has given them to serve West Portal Lutheran Church and School. May all of you share the blessings of knowing the Christ Child as you gather with family and friends this Christmas.



Wednesday, 1/1	CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED
Saturday, 1/3	10:00 AM Quilt Class-Fellowship Hall
Saturday, 1/3	5:00 PM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/4	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 1/4	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/4	11:15 AM Pastor Binz' Retirement Party
Tuesday, 1/6	7:00 PM Epiphany Service
Wednesday, 1/7	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 1/10	5:00 PM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/11	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 1/11	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/11	11:15 AM Elders Meeting
Wednesday, 1/14	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 1/17	5:00 PM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/18	9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary
Sunday, 1/18	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 1/18	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Wednesday, 1/21	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 1/24	11:00 AM Walk for Life-Fellowship Hall
Saturday, 1/24	5:00 PM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/25	9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary
Sunday, 1/25	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 1/25	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 1/25	11:15 AM Altar Guild Meeting-Library
Wednesday, 1/28	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class

## Altar Flowers

Flower Charts for the year 2026 are now posted in the Narthex. This is a very special way to help decorate the Altar, and to commemorate events or to remember loved ones. Flowers may be taken home or are delivered to our sick and shut-in members. Please call May Luu or Angie Holt in the church office, 415-661-0242, if you have any questions. The cost of a floral arrangement is \$60.00 .We encourage you to sign up for the new Flower Chart.





1 Linda Silveria  
1 Elaine Uy  
2 Jordan Crisologo  
2 Marvin Dye  
2 Avery Nulph  
4 Alexander Hsiao  
6 Edward Wong  
6 Stefanie Nixdorf  
6 Henny Laksana  
7 Naleya Perez  
7 Kinnan Wong  
8 Jessica Gatchalian  
8 Roland Jung  
9 Hiroaki Murata  
9 Quentin Lo  
9 Jacob Ngai  
10 Chris Chao  
11 Khalil Mrabe

11 Sylvia Mrabe  
11 Kristen Fung  
12 Stephan Kolsanoff  
12 Luca Stofferahn  
12 Jacqueline Kwok  
13 Kevin Szeto  
13 Cameron Park  
15 Rachel Hung  
16 Earl Lene de Santiago  
16 Courtney Park  
16 Sharon Tabar  
17 Nathaniel Fong  
18 Michele Boyer  
18 Sheila Tabar  
20 Trinity Batiste  
20 Michi Boyer  
20 Sean Patrick  
21 Aaron Fung  
21 Danielle Hirano  
21 Amy Kao  
23 Vincent Ammann  
24 Jeremiah Gatchalian

24 David Lew  
25 Alice Yue  
27 Brigitta Ammann  
27 Sherise Lee  
27 May Luu  
27 Chadwick Sheh  
29 Otto Fung  
29 Gordon Yee  
30 Pichaya Khamvatee  
31 Donald Woo  
31 Laurie Gonsalves  
31 Archie Wong



22 Morteza & Sharon Tabar  
25 Hiroaki Murata & Megumi Amano  
31 Rev. Curtis & Stacey Binz

### *"Pray for one another" (James 5:16)*

Let us follow this command of God's Word. Use the birthdays and anniversaries list each month to hold up one another to the Lord in prayer. You may wish to keep this list on your refrigerator, in your Bible, in your Portals of Prayer, or in some convenient place. What strength we receive from Almighty God when we sincerely pray for one another! And in these "interesting times," a call to a member wishing him/her birthday or anniversary greetings would probably be appreciated. It's particularly important that we keep in contact with each other when we're unable to meet in person.



## From the Accounting Office

### Important Notice

To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, do not file your 2025 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. You may lose a deduction for some contributions if you file your tax return before receiving a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. Annual contribution statements will be sent to you by the end of January. If you have not received your statement by early February, or if you need to receive it earlier, please contact the Accounting Office at 415-661-0242 ext 225 or email: [accountingoffice@wplsf.com](mailto:accountingoffice@wplsf.com).

### PLEASE PICK UP YOUR 2026 CHURCH

**OFFERING ENVELOPES.** They are arranged in alphabetical order on the table in the narthex. If you have a box in the mailroom your envelopes may be there. **Please start using your 2026 envelopes in January, and recycle (do not reuse) your old 2025 envelope boxes and any unused envelopes.** Your 2026 envelopes are a different color and most likely have a new number. If you did not receive a box of envelopes and would like one, please contact the church accounting office at (415) 661-0242 ext 225 e-mail: [accountingoffice@wplsf.com](mailto:accountingoffice@wplsf.com)

**Y**our tithes and offerings support the mission and ministries of West Portal Lutheran Church. If you wish to make an online donation, please use the QR code below. PayPal covers all transaction fees. You are donating to PayPal Giving Fund, a 501C(3) charity. Your donation is tax-deductible.



**THANKS FOR  
DONATING!**