



1656 Lincoln Way, McKeesport, PA 15131 + (412) 673-2296 + faithwhiteoak.com

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 25, 2026

Just How Near Is It?



This anxious question is as old as Christians' faith: How near? How near is the kingdom of heaven? Near when angels announce a holy birth. Now? Near when Jesus unrolls a scroll in the synagogue, declaring the acceptable time. Now? Near when miracles of sight and sound and speech, bread and water and wine astound. Now? Near when the Son of David trots into Jerusalem on a donkey, talks of paradise at Golgotha, abandons the tomb. Now?

Near when parades of calculations and predictions, numbering of days and decoding of signs make their guesses. Now?

John the Baptizer, eagerly baptizing converts and then, if hesitantly, Jesus himself—John the broadcaster, on behalf of a Savior for the world—gets arrested and executed. The hailed Messiah, Jesus, takes up residence in a tiny fishing village in a land overtaken and occupied by an empire of corruption and death. It would seem—or it *should* seem, if it does not—to anyone paying attention that the kingdom of heaven, if anywhere at all, was nowhere near.

“Repent” was Jesus’ inaugural message. Such a hard thing for people enduring in the hardest of times to hear. Repent of what, for what? By that time, ancient promises made in the name of God must have worn thin at best, if they had not already been tossed out as defective. In how many ways had unreliable promises and hopes for some heavenly kingdom been smashed in their collisions with each dawning day that proved to be just a copy of the grueling one before it?

Repent. Turn around. Pursue life in another direction. A gutsy dispatch! But it caught fire. It spread. It drew crowds because everywhere Jesus went, all through the everyday places of hard-hit dreams and suffering spirits and pained bodies—exactly in those places—Jesus showed himself to be the heavenly good news that heals, the joyful reason to repent of fear. So, welcome and become the kingdom of heaven now and here.

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2013 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Wendy S. Farone

Assisting Minister: Loran Bohman

Lector: Genevieve Price

Organist: Drew Pogyor

Altar Care: Loran Bohman

Altar Flowers: are given to the glory of God by the Halikos in honor of Kirsten Haliko's birthday.

The Sanctuary Light: is given to the glory of God by Barbara Jo Cush in memory of Kathryn B Cush.

The Columbarium Light: is given to the glory of God by Barbara Jo Cush in memory of Barbara L Beech.

Hymns for Sunday

Entrance Hymn **ELW 511 Thy Strong Word**

Hymn of the day **ELW 798 Will You Come and Follow Me**

Communion Hymns **ELW 799 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake**
ELW 582 Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

Sending Hymn **ELW 815 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light**

Communion- If you need assistance or are unable to come to the communion rail, stay in your pew, and the Pastor will come to you. If you are unable to receive either the consecrated bread or wine, receiving either one is a complete and valid reception.

Membership- There are many ways to be connected with our congregation. Everyone is welcome to participate in any congregation activities, and anyone baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is welcome to Holy Communion. We welcome your membership request.

January 18, 2026 Attendance: 32

Bible Study Attendance: 15

Offerings:

Weekly Need: **\$3,300.00**

January 18, 2026: **\$1,040.00**

Faith Announcements:

Pastor Wendy's Installation will take place today at 3 pm!

Super Bowl of Caring Sunday, February 8 – Once again, we will be collecting a Noisy Offering for Mission Agape. Time to clean out your pocket change! Remember, dollar bills make noise, just not as loud as coins.

Mardi Gras – Pancake and sausage dinner will be Saturday, February 14th, from 4 pm to 6:30 pm. Free and open to the community. NO takeout or no delivery. There will be crafts and supplies to make masks. There will be two sign-ups for Mardi Gras: one for those helping with setup, cooking, cleaning, serving, and another for those attending. Please invite friends, neighbors, etc.

Coffee Hour-February 15th after the worship service with Mission Agape! They will be providing literature on the programs and services they provide.

Ash and Dash-February 18th, starting at 6 am to 9 am. Walk-ins can come in for ashes from 9 am to 6:30 pm. Ash Wednesday Worship Service will start at 7 pm.

Lenten Project for 2026 will be Bucks for Backpacks! Mission Agape has taken on a backpack program, providing weekend backpacks of food for children within the McKeesport School District. The cost to provide backpacks is \$5 a weekend or \$20 a month. Currently, there are 100 children on this list, which means \$2,000 a month is needed for the backpacks. Requests have been made to Mission Agape to double the number of children, which means \$4,000 a month to cover the costs of the backpacks. Mission Agape plans to work with local legislators to gain support. But we at Faith can help too!

Field trip opportunity - It's a field trip to Mission Agape to see what they do and the community they serve! Food distributions are on Fridays. We can coordinate a carpool. No date set yet, but keep a lookout for the future.

New Gratitude List located on the bulletin board in the narthex! Pick up a pen and jot down anything that you're feeling grateful for.

We are looking for a used, wooden dining room table with several chairs, in good condition, to create an extra meeting space within the lounge area. Please contact the office or Pastor Wendy if you have one.

Nominating Committee for New Council Members

The following Nominating Committee, chosen at last year's Annual Meeting, will present names for new council members: **Kristen Byzek, Margie Miller, Kristi Howard, and Joyce Thomas.** If you are interested in serving on the council, please get in touch with Pastor Wendy or the Nominating Committee.

Annual Meeting Date: March 1, 2026, after worship.

Pastor's Podcast- New episode!

Understanding Church: Using the Gifts that God Gave You

<https://www.belc.org/podcast/> or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Welcome, Visitors and Guests,

We are glad you are here! We welcome you to participate fully in worship and to engage in all church activities. If you are considering joining as a member or have any questions, please get in touch with Pastor Wendy Farone at (412) 443-9122 (c), the Church Office at (412) 673-2296, or email flcpastorwendy@gmail.com. We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Everyone needs a church home and family. We hope to be yours!
Pastor Wendy

Council Meeting: February 19, 2026, at 12:30 pm.

Bible Storytelling Updates!

On January 27th at 10:30 am, we will be having a pizza party and also watch the movie, Unbroken!

Synod Announcements: (further information at swpasynod.org)

Lutheran Disaster Response Trip

May 3-9, 2026

Camp Lutheridge: Asheville, NC

Our Synod's Lutheran Disaster Response Team will be traveling for a second time for a week of mission work to help restore and rebuild communities across Western North Carolina affected by Hurricane

Helene. This trip is open to adults (18 and over), all experience levels welcome! Cost will be \$200 per person; a deposit of \$100 will be collected at registration to secure your registration. Pastor Roger Steiner is coordinating our registration process and can be reached at 412-913-9391 for questions. **Register by February 28th.**

Synod Youth Mission Trip

July 5-8: Johnstown, PA

Open to youth who have completed grades 6-12, with an opportunity for rising juniors and seniors to serve as Disciple Leaders. Our team will also meet up with the Nebraska Synod youth. More information coming soon.

Community Announcements

White Oak Senior Activities

Yoga Class-Mondays and Wednesdays-11 am to 12 pm

Gentle Exercise-Tuesdays 1/15, 1/20 & 1/27- 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Coffee Hour-Thursdays 1/15 & 1/29- 9:30 am to 11 am

Cardio Drumming- Tuesdays 1/20 & 1/27- 1 pm to 2 pm (**No Walk-ins**)

Prayer List January - March 2026

<u>Nikki</u> Amhurst	<u>Teresa</u> M
<u>Katie</u> Bachinger	<u>Berty</u> McMillen
<u>Becky</u> Ball	<u>Georgina</u> McMarlin
<u>Jean</u> Bickerstaff	<u>Marlene</u> Newman
<u>Jean</u> Bodenlos	<u>Hanna</u> Pitchford
<u>Barry</u> D	<u>Helen</u> Pula
<u>Kara</u> Eaton	<u>Corey</u> Rhodes
<u>Rose</u> Gombas	<u>Tracy</u> Scott
<u>Heather</u> Grantz	<u>Sandy</u> Seitz
<u>Bill</u> Grimm	<u>Maxine</u> Smith
<u>Jerry</u> Groves	<u>Steven</u> T
<u>Eric</u> Harshman	<u>Patty</u> Warnick
<u>Renee</u> K	<u>Theresa</u> Zell
<u>Ken</u> K	<u>Nick</u>
<u>Ellio</u> Keiser	<u>Filapose Family</u>
<u>Nancy</u> Kimling	<u>Quinn Family</u>
<u>Bill</u> Kimling	

*Please email flcwhiteoak@gmail.com for any additions or removals from this list.

Upcoming Commemorations

Conversion of Paul

Sunday, January 25, 2026

The week of prayer begun by the remembrance of Peter's confession now comes to an end as we recall the pivotal moment in the life of the other pillar of the early church, the apostle Paul. His encounter with the risen Christ turned him from persecutor of the followers of Christ to one of their leaders.

Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries

Monday, January 26, 2026

These three early Christian men were missionary companions of the apostle Paul. Timothy became bishop of Ephesus, Titus bishop of Crete, and Silas was imprisoned with Paul at Philippi until they were delivered by an earthquake.

Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Women as well as men were important Christian leaders from the beginning, as demonstrated by these coworkers of the apostle Paul. Lydia, a seller of purple goods, lent her home for a church; Dorcas was known for charitable works; and Phoebe was a deacon in the church at Cenchrae.

Thomas Aquinas, teacher, died 1274

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

One of the most brilliant and creative theologians in the church's history, Aquinas worked to bring together scripture and the philosophy of Aristotle. A member of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), Aquinas was also a hymnwriter.