

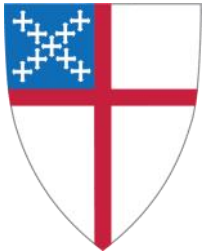


# The Flame

January 2026

**Our Mission** is to be a welcoming place where people meet Christ and grow in their relationship with God through our worship, service, and fellowship.

## Two Invitations



YOU ARE INVITED  
TO THE CELEBRATION OF NEW MINISTRY AND  
THE INSTALLATION OF REVEREND MARGARET BRACK.  
ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 22ND AT 6:30PM.



A RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW



Our Annual Parish Meeting is February 1st at 10:30, after the 9:30 service.  
Lunch will be provided by the vestry.

## Mother Margaret's Musings

Dear CHS Family,

I am sending you a poem and a prayer for the New Year. Please enjoy them! Let the scripture and intentions for the Prayer be a guide and help to you as we begin 2026. Please contact me if you would like to meet and discuss ways to use these. I pray you have a wonderful year. Mother Margaret+

### NEW YEAR'S DAY: CHURCH BELLS

Not the bleak speak of mobile messages,  
The soft chime of synthesised reminders,  
Not texts, not pagers, data packages,  
Not satnav or locators ever find us  
As surely, soundly, deeply as these bells  
That sound and find and call us all at once  
'Ears of my ears' can hear, my body feels  
This call to prayer that is itself a dance.  
So ring them out in joy and jubilation,  
Sound them in sorrow tolling for the lost,  
O let them wake the church and rouse the nation,  
A sleeping lion stirred to life at last  
Begin again they sing, again begin,  
A ring and rhythm answered from within



### A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Lord, please bless the coming year. Help me to use my time wisely and strengthen my resolve to consistently do all of the following:

**Never stop praying** (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Lord, teach me to pray without ceasing. Remind me to make prayer my first response rather than a last resort. Conform me to the image of Christ, that I might with Him pray, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

**Encourage one another** (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Lord, open my eyes to the needs of those around me. Help me to love my neighbors as I love myself and to put their interests ahead of my own. May every word I speak edify and uplift and point others to You.

**Work without complaining** (Philippians 2:14)

Place a guard on my mouth. God, that I might not grumble about the tasks I've been given to do. Help me to serve others with gladness and do my work heartily and cheerfully, as a sacrifice of praise unto You.

**Yearn for Christ's return** (Mark 13:32-33)

Lord, keep me mindful of the fact that my hope is not rooted in social movements or political reform, but in Christ alone. Speed the day of His return and let me be found faithfully doing His work when He appears.

**Evangelize the lost** (Mark 16:15)

Give me a heart for those who don't know You, God. May I boldly and urgently proclaim the gospel of grace and forgiveness of sins that is freely available to all who confess Jesus is Lord and believe You raised Him from the dead.

**Acknowledge Him** (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Don't let me outlive my love & devotion to You, Lord. Let my life serve as an example of what it means to trust You fully. May all I do and say and hope and think bring glory and honor to Your precious, holy name.

**Redeem the time** (Ephesians 5:15-16)

"Lord, teach us to number our days, that we might apply our hearts to wisdom." Don't let me squander my time on earth. Show me how to invest it wisely in activities and pursuits that will bear fruit for all of eternity.

## Deacons Corner

In 2025 I read (actually listened) to the entire Bible this year I enjoyed a podcast by Roman Catholic priest Fr. Mike Schmitz. For years, Fr. Mike has read several chapters from the Bible based on Ascension Press's Bible in a Year chronological plan. Fr. Schmitz has also offered commentary and prayer each day.

There were times where I would miss a day – sometimes several in a row – and would have to make them up by listening to two (or three) podcasts in one day. The podcasts average about 20+ minutes. I don't think they ever were over 30 minutes so I was able to find time each day to listen.

My experience of working towards this daily discipline was hard some of the time. I found it insightful all of the time. I also found that sometimes I felt God's presence more than others. The difference between the time I felt closer to God, or didn't, always had to do with how focused I was on what I was hearing.

I find that, for me, feeling the presence of God always has to do with my focus. I've discovered that the feeling of God's presence, or lack thereof, can change while in church services, in prayer, while studying the lectionary, or just about anything.

When praying in the garden of Gethsamane, Jesus asked his disciples "Could you not stay awake with me for one hour?" Matthew 26:40. Sometimes, I know I should be chided too because I can struggle with just 20 minutes. However, I also know that I get to try again, and again, and again.

Rather than entering 2026 with a resolution, I will be entering it with an intention. My intention will be to work toward being more present with God. I will again be listening to the Bible in a year and this time, I will be journaling what I am hearing and any reflections I may have.

As always, I invite you to join me. Join me in living with more intention in any form that helps you be more present with God as God is always present with us.



*Deacon Terri*

## Did you know:



Through the generosity of our parish the Church of the Holy Spirit has some home health aid supplies you can borrow for short time use. We have crutches, walkers, a wheelchair and several other items. See the office for more information.



The Office will be Closed  
Monday, January 19th



This is my final Senior Moment...I mean Sr. Warden moment for now. I have resigned Sr. Warden a few weeks early due to my health. I have 2 chronic conditions; Fibromyalgia and Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. No one thing is critically wrong, but my body systems are all flaring. I also live with depression & anxiety issues. Mental health is part of what has worn me down too. We must take care of our hearts and minds too! Stress, even good stress, is a huge trigger. Judy Darrell has taken over as Sr. Warden. She has been right by my side for 2 years and has hit the ground running! Ken Gomeringer has stepped up as Jr. Warden. Ken has a great deal of experience leading our church and vestry. He and Judy will be a great team!



Ted and Terri will continue to be wonderful liturgical and spiritual resources. Now we have been blessed with Mtr Margaret Brack as our new Rector/Head Honcho. Her huge heart and leadership talents will be so welcomed!

If you need help accessing the right people in church, please feel free to talk to me. I will connect you with the person or ministry that you need. I am also always open to talking about mental & physical health. You will not offend me by asking. I only ask that you don't judge me for caring for myself.

I am staying on as Christian Ed. Director. This position gives me more leeway to care for my body and mind.

*Cindy Pekarek*

## Parish Life

### End of Year Giving

As we roll into the new year, Corey will be closing out the books on 2025. To allow for checks in the mail to arrive before doing so, and for any last-minute offerings made to fulfill 2025 pledges, we will accept checks dated no later than 31 Dec 25 up until Monday, January 13, 2026. All funds received after this date will be attributed to 2026 regardless of date. If you need to increase your tax deductible giving for 2025 tax purposes remember all gift to the church are tax deductible



### Do Something New in the New Year: Serve as a Lay Eucharistic Minister



As we step into a new year together, many of us are called to deepen our faith and find new ways to serve. One opportunity is the ministry of the Lay Eucharistic Minister (LEM) — a calling rooted in illuminating God's word, leading prayer and sharing God's love with our parishioners.

Our LEMs serve in meaningful ways during worship. They proclaim God's Word by reading the Old Testament lesson, the Psalm, and the Epistle. They help lead the congregation in the Prayers of the People, inviting our community to lift our joys and sorrows before God. And during Communion, they assist the clergy in offering the wine (or grape juice) as Christ's gift of grace to all.

This is not simply "helping out." It is a sacred ministry. LEMs help hold the rhythm of worship, supporting us in Scripture, prayer, and sacrament. Training and mentorship is provided, support is ongoing, and no one is expected to be perfect. What matters most is a willing heart, care for our congregation, and a desire to grow closer to God.



**As we begin 2026, we give thanks for our wonderful CHS Lay Eucharistic Ministers who have faithfully offered their service.** Your dedication enriches our worship and strengthens our parish family.

**For those that might be curious about joining this ministry, please reach out to Jennifer Wilson at [jen@convergencecoaching.com](mailto:jen@convergencecoaching.com) to learn more.** You may find the Lord is inviting you into a ministry that blesses others and also blesses you.



## Christmas Pageant

This year, Paige Hausman has helped our kids and youth prepare for the Nativity Play. Cindy was very grateful for the help this year!! During down time, the kids also learned about the Advent candles and the story of Christ's birth. It is important for them to know how the holiday started beyond the commercial world. The play itself was about a church mouse learning the true story of Jesus at Christmas. It was great!



## Christmas Services



The Sundays of Advent came to a close with our sanctuary decked in greenery during the weeks of preparation, waiting and anticipation. Our Christmas Eve services saw the lights shining throughout the church. The red bows around, the poinsettias, and the candles lining the aisle. We joined in songs of gladness for the birth of our Lord Jesus!

We had many parishioners attending our Christmas Eve Service and Christmas day services, in person and online. Family and friends came

with our parish family and said how much they always enjoy the welcome of CHS!! I was so happy to meet at least two couples and a family who came for the first time and are looking to return.

May our Season of Epiphany carry this joy into the following year.

Mother Margaret+



## Youth Activities

### Sunday School

Welcome to 2026! Although I stepped down from being Sr. Warden in December, I am still very excited about Christian Ed! Sunday School resumes on January 11th after the 9:30am service. Since it is our spring semester, we are going forward from the manger in Bethlehem to learn about Jesus and his work. It is fun to walk through the adventures of the New Testament! Jean Cook and Lori Stevens will continue to be our 2nd-5th grade teachers. Lisa Weilandt and I will be the Little's teachers. I can't wait to get back in the classroom! The disaster of my office will have to wait a little longer. Kids don't stay young for long!



During our fall semester we learned about the Old Testament, including ways it connects with the Jesus story. Paige Hausman led/herded our kids into a sweet Nativity Play in December. This helped while I was Sr. Warden! Paige is a great example of someone who volunteered in our Children's Ministry for a special project. In February I will need adults and teens that want to help our Vacation Bible School in June. I really missed that experience last year!

Parents, Grandparents, and Kids, please make room in your heart and your schedule for Sunday School. Our teachers work hard to prepare lessons, crafts, and games every week. We are lonely when no one comes! It is also harder on the kids when there is only 1 or 2 in a group. We want them to feel like they belong to something special. On that note, Mtr. Margaret is excited to start having a children's sermon on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 9:30am. This will be so fun! Be sure to join us!

Please let me know if there are ways we can improve your child's walk with God at our church.

-Cindy Pekarek, Christian Ed. Director

### Journeys



We had a low key but fun Christmas party December 17th. We ate pizza, played white elephant and decorated cookies. The kids had fun and the adults were able to just enjoy everyone's company. Looking forward to the new years eve..



### Longest Night:



The Longest Night of the Year in our hemisphere is December 21st. For those struggling with homelessness and related issues, December 21st can be one of the most difficult nights to survive.

Magdalene Omaha (MO), a treatment facility for those who have been trafficked, held its 4th Annual “The Longest Night” vigil on December 21, 2025. The goal of the vigil is to raise awareness of the issue of trafficking in Omaha, raise funds for its survivor programs, and to be a light in the darkness for those still being trafficked. In last month’s Flame, I shared that members of our Journeys youth group and their parents committed to standing outside for two hours in support of Magdalene Omaha, its mission, and be lights for those still in the darkness.

I’m delighted to say that the six members of Journeys followed through on their commitment as did seven parents. Mother Margaret and I joined in the event as well. At a minimum, it was inspiring to watch those who participated shine the Light of Christ on everyone their and to hold those still suffering in their hearts.



The survivors and staff at Magdalene Omaha were very hospitable and although the night had a bitter wind, MO offered handwarmers, warm food and drink and a lot of great fellowship that helped make the evening a bit more bearable. It was not lost on us, however, that there are many still being bought and sold and it is often the only way they can stay warm.

At the end of the evening, many participants paused to write a reflection of their experience and to post it

on a wall in MO’s facility. One staff member commented that in the wee hours of the morning, when cold and tired, those reflections would provide her with inspiration to keep going.

The group from CHS has decided to participate in the vigil again next year and is considering what more it can do. Members and friends of CHS will be invited to join us again in 2026.

Deacon Terri

## Outreach

### Mobile Food Pantry:

The word is getting around. In December we were able to distribute all of the food we had for the Food Pantry. Such a blessing for everyone. Thanks to all our volunteers for helping.

There is no food pantry this month,. The next Food Pantry will be February 28.



## Vestry Meeting Minutes December 18, 2025

**Attendance:** Rev. Margaret Brack (Rector), Judy Darrell, Ken Gomeringer, Rick Horejs, Brian Caskie, Barb Smith, Vince Cummings Jr., Patrick Howell, Marcia Adams (Treasurer), Jenn Moffett (Recorder)

**Excused:** Cindy Pekarek, Margie Guy

### Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with prayer, invoking guidance, unity, and attentiveness to God's calling in this season of ministry.

### EAGLE SCOUT PRESENTATIONS

**Vince Cummings III (Life Scout)** presented a proposed Eagle project to build additional storage racks for seasonal décor (including wreaths/garlands) to improve organization and protect items in storage.

**Action Item:** Vince to provide a written plan and estimated material costs; a brief bulletin note will be drafted to request donated supplies as available.

**Evelyn Cummings (Life Scout)** presented a proposed Eagle project to paint the downstairs office hallway (and discussed possible additional areas).

**Action Item:** Evelyn to confirm final scope with church leadership and provide a materials list, schedule, and paint/supply needs.

### TREASURER'S REPORT / Finances

Marcia Adams presented the financial reports. The vestry reviewed operational expenses, changes in equity, and designated fund expenditures.

#### Designated Fund Expenditures

Fund	Purpose	Amount
Werner Park	East Hill Restoration	\$2,770.00
Outreach	Thanksgiving Baskets	\$1,655.20
Seasonal Offering	New Christmas Greenery	\$806.82
Seasonal Offering	Mtr. Margaret Loan	\$9,000.00
Moving Vets Forward	Moving Vets Forward	\$44.57
Oktoberfest	Paper Goods	\$133.78

#### Financial Overview (as reported):

- Cash assets: \$232,470.04
- Outstanding checks (liabilities): \$5,578.96
- Net cash assets: \$226,891.08
- Unrestricted funds: \$49,614.71
- Temporary funds: \$96,241.29
- Restricted funds: \$32,952.00

Total assets available: \$768,813.96

**Motion M03121825:** Accept the Treasurer's Report

**Motion:** Rick Horejs **Second:** Vince Cummings Jr. **Motion Carried**

**Motion M04121825:** Pay the Bills

**Motion:** Vince Cummings Jr. **Second:** Rick Horejs **Motion Carried**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Dec 20** – 4:30pm: Terry Kunkel Celebration of Life
- **Dec 20** – 6:30pm: Blue Christmas Service
- **Dec 21** – 7:00–9:00pm: The Longest Night with J2A
- **Dec 24** – 5:00, 7:00, & 10:00pm: Christmas Eve Services
- **Dec 25** – 10:00am: Christmas Day Service
- **Dec 26**- Office Closed
- **Dec 27 & Jan 4**- No Sunday School
- **Dec 28**- Ted's Last Day as Deacon at the Altar
- **Dec 31–Jan 1**- J2A Lock-In
- **Jan 4**- Celebration of Deacon Ted's Service
- **Jan 4** – 5:00pm: Vestry & Leaders Epiphany Dinner Party
- **Jan 6**- Epiphany
- **Jan 11**- Children's Sermon in service (first time to try this)
- **Jan 11** – 10:45am: Finance Committee
- **Jan 11**- Sunday School Resumes

## DISCUSSION ITEMS AND UPDATES

**Senior Warden Transition** Rev. Margaret Brack shared that Cindy Pekarek has stepped down from the role of Senior Warden due to health reasons. Judy Darrell will step into the Senior Warden role, and Ken Gomeringer will serve as Junior Warden.

**VPoD Checklist** The vestry discussed ongoing issues with missed tasks (e.g., doors/lights) and agreed to begin printing and using the checklist consistently.

**Action Item:** Start printing and using the VPoD checklist each week.

**Rector's Moving Loan** The Seasonal Offering loan to Rev. Brack was noted as part of the designated fund expenditures.

**Vestry & Leaders Dinner** The Vestry & Leaders Epiphany Dinner Party is scheduled for Sunday, January 9 at 5:00pm.

**Copier Replacement / Lease** The vestry received a presentation regarding replacing the church copier due to incompatibility and support limitations. A lease option was reviewed, including delivery, set-up, training, and network installation.

**Motion M01121825: Approve the Copier Lease (as presented)**

**Motion:** Ken Gomeringer **Second:** Rick Horejs **Motion Carried**

**Sound System Headsets** To improve audibility for upcoming services, the vestry approved purchasing two headsets using the sound system budget.

**Motion M02121825: Approve up to \$300 for Two Headsets (Sound System Budget)**

**Motion:** Barb Smith **Second:** Brian Caskie **Motion Carried**

**2026 Budget** The vestry reviewed the draft 2026 budget. Given remaining questions and the need for additional review, the budget decision was tabled.

**Motion M05121825: Table the 2026 Budget**

**Motion:** Patrick Howell **Second:** Ken Gomeringer **Motion Carried**

**Building Use Proposal** Rev. Brack shared an early-stage proposal for a county juvenile probation program to use one classroom during weekdays (small group of youth, fully supervised). A formal written proposal is expected. No decision was made at this meeting.

**Action Item:** Rev. Brack will share the written proposal with the vestry once received so the vestry can review and vote with full information.

**Adjournment**

**Motion M06121825:** Motion to Adjourn

**Motion:** Judy Darrell **Second:** Patrick Howell **Motion Carried**

**Closing Prayer** The meeting concluded with prayer.

**Next Regular meeting of the Vestry:** January 15, 2026

**Outstanding Checks (11-30-2025)**

34436 \$78.65  
34463 \$470.45  
EFT \$60.71  
34483 \$100.00  
34484 \$166.60  
34496 \$400.00  
34498 \$806.82  
34501 \$239.28  
34502 \$16.00  
34504 \$2,770.00  
34505 \$470.45  
**TOTAL:** \$5,578.96

## ***FINANCIAL REPORT***

### **Financial Report as of November 30, 2025**

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
Contributions	\$ 12,297.00	\$ 18,297.58	\$ 194,647.00	\$ ,201,273.42
Other Inc.	\$ <u>297.49</u>	\$ <u>611.33</u>	\$ <u>5,062.11</u>	\$ <u>6,724.67</u>
Total Inc	\$ 16,594.49	\$ 20,692.25	\$ 215,719.58	\$ 227,614.75
Expenses	\$ 22,628.37	\$ 21,126.83	\$ <u>198,123.04</u>	\$ 232,395.69
	\$ -6,033.88	\$ - 434.63	\$ 17,596.54	\$ -4,780.94



## UPCOMING PARISH EVENTS!

<b>Jan</b>	<b>11</b>	Finance Meeting -11am
<b>Jan</b>	<b>15</b>	Vestry Meeting - 6:30pm
<b>Jan</b>	<b>19</b>	Office Closed
<b>Jan</b>	<b>21</b>	Youth Group Bingo Night - 6:30pm
<b>Jan</b>	<b>22</b>	Mother Margaret Installation - 6:30pm
<b>Feb</b>	<b>1</b>	Annual Meeting - 10:30am



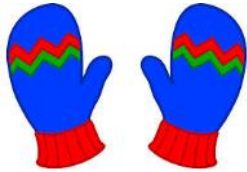
## LAY MINISTRIES SCHEDULE

Ministries	Jan 4	Jan 11	Jan 18	Jan 25
<b>VPOD</b>	Vince C	Barb S	Rick H	Vince C
<b>Hospitality Team</b> 9:30 am <i>Greeters ,Ushers &amp; Coffee Hour Host</i>	Team 4	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4
<b>Spirit Hub</b>	Hospitality - Greeters / Ushers	Out-Reach Meals on Wheels	Vestry	Out –Reach Food for parish members
<b>Altar Bread</b>	Jan S	Jan S	Jan S	Jan S
<b>Recycle Team</b>	Jan S	Marcia A	Susan H	Karen G
<b>LEM Saturday</b> 5:00 pm	Charlotte A	Kristi S	Toby W / Kathy B	Charlotte A
<b>LEM Sunday</b>	Cindy P	Doug A	Cindy P	Doug A
<b>LEM Sunday</b> 9:30 am	Jan S Lori E	Brian C Vince C	Jen W Michele H	Carol S Amber H
<b>LEV</b>	Team 3	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
<b>Acolytes</b> Crucifer Torch Torch	Olivia H MacKenzie C Ailynn M	Isaiah JH Amanda N Evelynn C	Vincent C Olivia H Mya H	MacKenzie C Evelynn C Kyper M

*Please submit articles for the  
February 2026 FLAME to the  
church office by January 19th.  
Thank you*



**Like Us!**  
**Facebook**



### Regular Services:

**Sunday:** 8:00am *Holy Eucharist Rite I*  
9:30 am *Holy Eucharist Rite II \**  
**Wednesday** 9:30 am *Holy Eucharist\**  
**Saturday:** 5:00 pm *Holy Eucharist*  
\* Broadcast live on Facebook

### Education: September - May

**Sunday:** *Sunday School @ 10:45 am*  
**Wednesday:** *Bible Study @ 10:15 am*

### Office Hours:

**Monday – Thursday:** 9:00 am–1:00 pm  
**Friday:** 9:00 am–Noon

### Rector's Sabbath:

*Friday*

*The Flame* is a monthly production of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Episcopal, in Bellevue, Nebraska. We welcome all stories, pictures, and suggestions, but must reserve the right to choose what we can print. Please send articles and pictures to CHS Admin at [holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org](mailto:holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org). The next deadline for submitting news is January 19th.

**Webpage:** [www.chsepiscopal.org](http://www.chsepiscopal.org)

**Email:** [holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org](mailto:holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org)

***The Flame***  
***Newsletter of The Church of the Holy Spirit - Episcopal***  
**1305 Thomas Drive**  
**Bellevue, NE 68005-2973**  
**402-291-7732**