

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Epiphany Council's December Devotion

As we quickly approach the celebrated day of Christ's Birth, I'm honoured to be the last Council member to deliver a devotion before that blessed event. With Christmas hoopla in full swing, it is easy to get distracted from it's true meaning, as merchants try to wring every last dollar by attaching vacuous connections to the baby Jesus for profit.

The book of Genesis described the fundamental truths about God. His role as the Creator, His hatred of sin, His love for mankind, and His willingness to provide for our redemption. God is well aware that humans are unrighteous and deceptive.

In spite of this, **John 3:16** affirms: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

You would think that in two thousand years, we would have resolved some of man's shortcomings but it seems that evil too, grows exponentially. Wars, famine and inequality have been so normalized that you can practically pick which war you want to tune into. Wealth and power have put people in charge that have no business being there. Mainstream media panders to this celebration of ignorance and populism over the truly expert minds available. Mankind has this "seat of the pants" approach to even the biggest problems. For more than 50 years we have had no more complex solutions for atomic bombardment than hiding under a school desk. Climate change has people believing that since we're still 1 or 2 degrees away from the tipping point to mean that it's okay to jet off to some sun-drenched beach and kick the can down the road another year or two.

But there is another side. Learned, well-intentioned individuals devoting their efforts for the good of mankind.

It is no secret that Pope Francis earned a master's degree in Chemistry from the University of Buenos Aires, and is no stranger to science. He did not hesitate to fire the "Archbishop Of Bling" for abusing funds and then converted the Archbishop's 40 million dollar mansion into a soup kitchen for the poor. Pope Francis gets it.

Cited in **Matthew 6:12** and central in the Lord's Prayer: *"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."*

Yes, forgiveness is a cornerstone of God's love for us. It affords us the opportunity to put aside the guilt and shame of poor choices in our past and allows us to forge ahead with a renewed sense of purpose with integrity.

Galations 3:13 reminds us: *"Bear with each other and forgive one another and if any of you have a grievance against someone, forgive them as the Lord forgave you."*

Many would remember Mr. Rogers for one of his more compassionate chestnuts: **"God loves you just the way you are."** These few words were no doubt a revelation to countless children who had not yet discovered a path to their own self worth.

So, as we celebrate the Christ-Child coming into our world, it may be a good time to not only remind ourselves that everyone has their own challenges, but also that **Love, Compassion and Forgiveness** should be the busiest implements in our toolbox.

Gord Munro



DECEMBER 2024 CALENDAR

SUNDAY DECEMBER 1

ADVENT 1 (BLUE)

12 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY DECEMBER 8

ADVENT 2 (BLUE)

12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

THURSDAY DECEMBER 12

7:00 p.m. Council Meeting

SUNDAY DECEMBER 15

ADVENT 3 (BLUE)

12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)
Followed by Christmas Tree decorating

SUNDAY DECEMBER 22

ADVENT 4 (BLUE)

12 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

TUESDAY DECEMBER 24

CHRISTMAS EVE (WHITE)

4 p.m. Christmas Eve Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY DECEMBER 29

1 CHRISTMAS (WHITE)

12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

Zoom Link to EPIPHANY LUTHERAN

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)
[pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)
Or by phone following the prompts:
+1 647 374 4685 Canada
Meeting ID: 989 080 0583 Passcode: 095565

Epiphany's new Interim Pastor

We would like to extend a warm welcome to Pastor Peter Lisinski as our new Interim Minister commencing December 1, 2024.

Pastor Peter has led a number of services at Epiphany as a guest pastor and is currently also Interim Pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

We look forward to sharing this Advent and Christmas season with Pastor Peter and to his shepherding us into 2025.

Bible Study

After an unavoidable hiatus, Bible Study will resume in January 2025. The plan is to review and complete the reading and discussion of Scott Erickson's book, *Say Yes: Discover the Surprising Life Beyond the Death of a Dream*.

The first session will be Friday, January 10, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. The sessions will be online via Google Meet; the link will be sent out in advance.

We have enjoyed Bible Study under the guidance and insight of Marg Crewe; however, Marg is lending her expertise to other areas of need at Epiphany, so I will do my best to follow her lead as the Bible Study coordinator.

I look forward to meeting in January to engage, encourage, and expand our spiritual selves!

Denise Dennis

Offering Envelope Update

It's hard to believe it's Fall, as we enjoyed extended mild weather, but 2025 is rapidly approaching.

While you have all been great about stretching the use of our outdated Offering Envelopes over the last couple of years, I'm pleased to advise that new ones for 2025 are forthcoming. Everyone who currently uses envelopes will be provided with a new set, which will be made available to you in late December, the exact date to be announced during Sunday services. Please let me know should you not be able to collect yours from the Narthex, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Kindly address any other related questions to me. I'm happy to help.

Wishing you a blessed Advent and joyful New Year.

Sigrid Engler, Envelope Secretary



Eastern Synod Christmas Tree ~ A New Tradition

This year, Bishop Carla and the Synod Staff Team would like to put up a new Christmas Tree in the Synod Office to mark the holiday season. To make this tree particularly special, Synod would love for it to represent the vastness of our synodical family by inviting congregations to send one ornament to hang on the tree.

Ute Wentzel suggested sending one of our crocheted snowflake ornaments made lovingly by our Craft Circle a long time ago. I packaged the ornament and mailed it out on Monday, November 11th. Hopefully, Synod will receive it before Christmas or before photo day on December 13th.

Ornaments will be tagged with the name of the congregation who made the donation and will be hung in the office as part of this special new tradition.

Nalini Badley

Church Property Cleanup Update

The weather was sunny, cool and dry—ideal for Epiphany’s property cleanup on Saturday November 16. Thanks to the small but mighty group of leaf rakers, blowers, baggers and transporters who managed to line the curb with 105 bags! Thanks also go to ELW for providing drinks along with sandwiches and veggies afterwards.



PHOTO BY DOROTHEA CAMERON



PHOTO BY SIGRID ENGLER

Stewardship: CHRISTMAS

MANY OF US will enjoy Christmas in the company of our family. However, some of our neighbours do not have family with whom they celebrate. A special request has been made to gather items for the people in long-term care at Guildwood Extencicare who do not have family. Items that are appreciated by the residents are: puzzle books and pencils, cozy socks, personal care items (for example: shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, small boxes of tissues), sweets, and small stuffed animals.

If you can contribute, there will be a box at the church (as of December 1, 2024) for your donation. I will collect the box after the worship service on Sunday, December 15, 2024, and deliver it to the person coordinating this Christmas initiative. Or, you are welcome to drop off your donation at 42 Avonmore Square, Scarborough (in Guildwood) between December 9 and 15, 2024.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtfulness toward our neighbours as we celebrate God’s generous gift of salvation!

*Christmas blessings,
Denise Dennis*

VISIONING COMMITTEE UPDATE

After a relatively quiet period, the Visioning Committee and Church Council recently met with Allan Meiusi, representing the Estonian Relief Committee (ERC), our neighbour and potential development partner of the church property.

It has been a long process, as the ERC had to meet with provincial and municipal groups to determine the level of support to develop a new long term care facility, a retirement home and senior's housing on our property. Briefly, the meetings went well and there is significant support which allowed the ERC to search for architects, contractors and financing partners. At this point they are close to finalizing their choices and as a result are ready to meet with Epiphany to ask for approval to move forward on our lands.

This will involve calling a congregational meeting where a vote will be held to decide whether Epiphany will move forward with the ERC on the redevelopment of the church property.

The new development would include new worship and meeting areas for Epiphany as well as new space for our current tenant Absorbent Minds Montessori School. Our facilities would have a separate entrance and space dedicated and designed for our needs to worship and fulfill our mission and community outreach goals.

As mentioned, the ERC plans on constructing a long-term care facility with approximately 96 beds, a retirement home and senior's housing. Each component would be supported by common or

dedicated recreational areas, dining areas and other social and meeting areas. The entire complex could be 6 storeys high, with a cost of over \$60,000,000 to develop.

Depending on final design and an evaluation of our needs, Epiphany may decide to share some of these uses with the ERC or decide to fulfill our needs within our own space.

If approved by the congregation, work would then begin on the design of our space.

Once information has been received from the ERC and in preparation for the congregational meeting, it is our plan to have information sent out prior to the meeting to encourage and guide the discussion on the future growth, purpose and mission of Epiphany Lutheran Church.

This will be an important meeting for the congregation. Your input will be necessary to help us all decide how we move forward. We look forward to everyone's participation.

Stay safe! God Bless!



EPIPHANY SANCTUARY ~ CHRISTMAS 2020



EPIPHANY STAINED GLASS WINDOW



EPIPHANY STAINED GLASS WINDOW

Your voice is important!

As the Church Council and the Visioning Committee continue managing the daily affairs of the congregation and what the future may hold, we need you to “say your piece” and not “hold your peace.”

It may be tempting to “hold your peace” if you believe there are other voices that will carry the congregation forward with wisdom and good will. However, we are a smaller congregation now, which means every person must “say your piece” to both guide next steps and carry a vote when required. We can still be mighty in sharing the gift of God’s love through salvation, but we must have a quorum for the Annual General Meeting (February 2025) to conduct the business of the congregation. Just as importantly, your voice will be needed at all special meetings called to determine next steps regarding our future.

If you need help to attend a meeting, whether in person or on Zoom, please let a member of the Church Council know so we can support you.

We need you to “say your piece!”

Denise Dennis (on behalf of the Church Council)



German Worship Connections

We are happy to share opportunities for our German speaking members to worship and hear occasional sermons in your native tongue.

Pastor Katharina from St. George’s in downtown Toronto will hold an occasional prayer and social gathering in Scarborough at the Schwabenclub. Please speak to Ute Wentzel for more information.

Pastor Annika from Martin Luther Church has a weekly devotion that airs on Sunday at 9:30am on CHLO Radio AM530 and which is also posted on their website. Please follow the links below if you wish to hear her devotion.

AM530 Website: <https://am530.ca>

Martin Luther Church Website: <https://martinluther.ca/worship-services/radio-devotions-podcasts/>

CHURCH COUNCIL

Council Chair:	Geoff Crewe
Council Vice-Chair:	Denise Dennis
Council Secretary:	Vacant
Councillor-at-Large:	Greg Furan
Councillor-at-Large:	Gord Munro
Councillor:	Gordon Vollmer
Councillor:	Sigrid Engler
Treasurer:	Nalini Badley

COMMITTEE LIAISONS

Education:	Open
Finance:	Geoff Crewe
Property:	Geoff Crewe
Stewardship:	Denise Dennis
Visioning:	Gordon Vollmer
AMMS Liaison:	Geoff Crewe
Worship & Music:	Marg Crewe
Morningstar:	Sigi Sommer
Seniors Group:	Ute Wentzel
Advertising Coordinator:	Nalini Badley
ELW:	Sigrid Engler
Envelope Secretary:	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry:	Open
Spiritual Society Liaison:	Open

TREASURER’S REPORT

OCTOBER 2024	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS (DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$4,095.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	223.57		
AMMS PROPERTY TAX	1,233.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	58.84		
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$9,685.41	\$7,100.63	\$2,584.78
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$100,592.02	\$97,917.90	\$2,674.12
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT OCTOBER 31, 2024			45,056.09
CIBC INVESTOR’S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT THE END OF OCTOBER			169,895.77
SCOTIA BANK NON REDEEMABLE GIC AT 5% MATURING AUGUST 28, 2025			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer

My Dear Christian Friends:

Peace be with you.

Let me begin by thanking the faithful members of council and congregation for entrusting me with the privilege of serving among you as interim pastor. It seems fitting to begin our new companionship as people of God on the First Sunday in Advent, December 1, AD 2024 – not only the first day of a new month, but the first day of a new liturgical year. So, in keeping with the spirit of the season: “Happy New Year!”

Of course, the season of Advent anticipates our annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, who inaugurates – theologically, “*incarnates*” – a new beginning in God’s eternal companionship with the whole worldwide web (www) of mortal humanity – from first century Bethlehem all the way to third-millennium Canada! As we begin this new year of our Lord, AD 2024, the people of God, not only locally here at Epiphany but also globally, wonder how God’s love will continue to unfold among us, around us and, lest we forget, through us!

Whatever the particulars; whatever the duration, whatever the outcome of our newborn companionship in the Gospel, we will worship together, wonder together, work and walk together, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us into the coming future God has in store for us all – for the church, for this congregation, and for the world. By God’s will and providence, you and I have now been called to continue our faith journey together – for a limited time. Indeed, *all* life and ministry in this mortal world is *interim* – even if it lasts thirty-three years, as did Jesus’ earthly life from his birth in Bethlehem (“House of Bread”) to his crucifixion in Jerusalem (“City of Peace”). But the promise of all faithful ministry is *eternal*, as Jesus’ resurrection, on the *first* day of a new week, affirms!

I give thanks to God, and to you all, for your faithfulness to the ministry and mission of Epiphany Lutheran Church in these particularly challenging times for the Christian churches of western civilization. In season and out, the very name of our congregation reminds us of our vocation to manifest, to make visible, to reflect the light of Christ in the darkness of the world around us. Apostle Paul puts it this way: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

As we join the Wise Men from the East to follow the Christmas Star from Advent to Epiphany and through Lent to Easter, we have the promise of Emmanuel, God with us in Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, who feeds us at the manger of God’s infinite love – conceived in the darkness of a virgin womb, born in the divine humanity of the Christ Child, established in the crucifixion of Jesus, and fulfilled in his resurrection – *and our own!* – within God’s own eternal life.

Merry Christmas, indeed! Come, Lord Jesus!

Interim Pastor Peter Lisinski

Gesegnetes Weihnachten



Blessed Christmas