



The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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EPIPHANY E-PISTLE

Dear Epiphany Household of Faith,
May God's grace, mercy and peace, incarnate in the Christ Child, bless us in our discipleship of worship and service in this New Year!

Since the mid-fourth century A.D. January 6 has been celebrated in western Christendom as the date on which the "Wise Men", or "Magi" of Matthew's Christmas Gospel found the newborn "King of the Jews" in Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:1-12). This festival day came to be known as "Epiphany" – a Greek word meaning "Manifestation", or "Revelation" of a previously unknown mystery (see Ephesians 3:1-6).

Under suspicion of King Herod, these visitors from "the East" explained their arrival in Jerusalem as a spiritual pilgrimage of worship. And when they reached their destination guided by a "Star of Wonder", they offered the Christ Child precious gifts: gold – symbolic of financial wealth and economic power; frankincense – symbolic of humanity's longing for God's companionship and blessing; and myrrh – an ancient oil used to anoint bodies for burial (see Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 16:1), thus symbolic of our common human mortality, overcome by God's gift of eternal life manifest, revealed (Epiphany) in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God's anointed – "Messiah" in Hebrew; "Christ" in Greek.

As this New Year A.D. 2025 begins, our spiritually sick and dying world is engulfed in fear, greed, poverty and war – with rumours of more! As bearers of the name "Epiphany", anointed by Jesus Christ's death and resurrection in baptism and made heirs of God's universal love, let us make a New Year's resolution to *manifest*, in our church life, as well as our personal lives, the light of the Morningstar that led ancient star-gazers to the joyful vision of God's salvation, *revealed* in the Holy Child of Bethlehem, the true light of the world, which no darkness has ever, can ever, will ever overcome; and let us join them in proclaiming God's promised future of love and peace for all, with all we have, all we hope, all we are, and all we do!

Happy Epiphany! Happy New Year!

Pastor Peter Lisinski



JANUARY 2025 CALENDAR

SUNDAY JANUARY 5

EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD (BLUE)
12 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

THURSDAY JANUARY 9

7:00 p.m. Council Meeting

FRIDAY JANUARY 10

10:00-11:15 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 12

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD (WHITE)
12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 19

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

FRIDAY JANUARY 24

10:00-11:15 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 26

3 EPIPHANY (GREEN)
12 noon Holy Communion Service
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

STEWARDSHIP: From my desk...

The new year is starting with a hearty and heartfelt measure of gratitude. One might think that as membership declines and the future of Epiphany is still “in the works” that the Christmas spirit of “good will to all men” might also suffer. This has not been the case! Thoughtful gifts sent to the neighbours at Guildwood Extendicare (people we may never meet) from the hearts and hands of members of Epiphany brightened Christmas for 25 Extendicare residents, residents with no family to share Christmas giving and gifting.

So much of what has been asked under the subject of “stewardship” in 2024 has been accomplished by the anonymous “saints” of Epiphany. As we embrace the new year, I am prayerfully confident that we can continue to bless our neighbours through prayers and practicalities.

So, this new year starts with my gratitude for your thoughtful and unselfish sharing of your time and your treasure with our neighbours. I am blessed to be counted among you!

Happy New Year —

Denise Dennis



PHOTO BY SIGRID ENGLER

We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, some have strange names, and all are different colours, but they exist very nicely together in the same box. — ANONYMOUS





PHOTO BY UTE WENTZEL

Pastor Peter's sermon on the 3rd Sunday of Advent was so thoughtful and thought-provoking that it has been reprinted here with his permission.

FROM POLARIZATION TO PEACE

In this year of our coming Lord, AD 2024, Merriam-Webster's Dictionary has chosen the word 'polarization' as its annual "Word of the Year"! Polarization refers to the global evolution of mutually exclusive visions and diametrically opposed strategies for establishing and maintaining social stability and economic security in a divided world of increasing intolerance fueled by the same antagonistic attitudes of fear, anger and hatred John the Baptist confronts in today's Gospel: "You brood of vipers!"

Vipers are a particularly aggressive and deadly breed of poisonous snake. And as a metaphor of human behaviour, according to Webster's Dictionary, a viper is "a malicious, spiteful, or treacherous person" (p. 1,586). John's message pulls no punches, and excludes no one; it addresses us all! We may not be as mean, nasty or harmful as the average viper, but all human beings carry the basic survival instinct that prominent biologist and philosopher Richard Dawkins calls "the selfish gene". Martin Luther called it natural self-interest. The Bible calls it sin.

But instead of being offended by John's rather blunt and harsh judgment, many responded positively and asked, "What then should we do?" I imagine that is the question you have been asking among yourselves during these particularly challenging times within your congregation, indeed for all the declining churches of western civilization: "What shall we do? What's our future mission? How can we best serve the community around us?"

John identified the same three symptoms of humanity's self-destructive self-interest condemned by all biblical prophets. First, poverty: "Let whoever has two coats share with those who have none; and let those who have food do likewise." According to John's vision, no child of God should be deprived of food, clothing or shelter. Second, taxes – they've been in the news lately: "Collect no more than is appointed." Make the taxation system fair to all. Third, military power; addressing soldiers, John said: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation; be content with your wages." Do not use your position of power and authority to intimidate or exploit others.

These are the three primary social consequences of sin polarizing our world today, even as they polarized the world at the time of Jesus' birth. Remember how that story begins? "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered – "taxed", according to the King James translation most of us grew up with! ..." (Luke 2:1). The primary purpose for this imperial decree was to ensure the efficient collection of taxes required to recruit and pay soldiers well enough to secure their loyal service in establishing, expanding and enforcing the Roman Empire's ambition to control the global economy! Sound familiar? As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, poverty and military power remain the two biggest obstacles to peace, and both are the direct result of how governments budget and spend the money collected in taxes.

John's vision of peace on earth, proclaimed by a choir of angels celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ thirty years earlier, was – and remains – diametrically opposed – the polar opposite – to Caesar's vision of peace on earth. Hence, both were executed in the name of Caesar, whose legacy perpetuates a culture of permanent war on earth.

The goal of world peace – dear to the heart of every beauty pageant contestant – seems as distant today as when John the Baptist first proclaimed the coming of God's Messiah in the wilderness of the ancient Middle East; and so we ask the same helpless question the crowds asked in today's Gospel: "What then shall we do?"

John's answer was to share the wealth generated by creation's natural resources and human ingenuity more fairly; to treat our neighbours more respectfully, and live more humbly. In his conversations with tax collectors and soldiers – people in public positions of trust and authority – John called for integrity and honesty. He spelled out clearly that every human being is a child of God with a divine right to food, clothing and shelter; and that the enforcement of law and order must never violate human dignity or inflict excessive physical or psychological harm.

That's what John means when he says, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance." John the Baptist called for a radical turning away from our own attitudes and behaviours of greed, hatred and violence; and John called for a radical turning toward attitudes and behaviours of justice, compassion and humility. "Even now the ax is lying at the root of the tree..." The word 'radical' has its roots in the word 'root'! John called for radical personal and social reformation that reaches the very roots of our faith, civilization and human nature! And he promised that the unquenchable fire of God's Holy Spirit would reverse the world's polarization through the coming of God's Messiah, whose winnowing fork will sweep away the imperial cultures of poverty and war, and gather all who hunger and thirst for God's reign of love and peace, born in a Bethlehem barn and laid in a manger in the divine humanity of Jesus Christ, who came, who comes and who will come again, to feed all God's children with the bread of life, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen



Pastor Peter Lisinski





Did you drink from your tap today? Did you feel safe doing so?

For members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation, the answer to both of those questions is probably 'no'. Since

1962, the people of this Nation have been suffering from the consequences of mercury dumped from the Dryden Pulp Mill into the Wabigoon River. On September 18th of this year members of Grassy Narrows were joined by people from across Ontario to demand justice for this 62 year tragedy. Their demands were:

- Compensate Grassy Narrows fairly for the ongoing mercury crisis
- End industrial threats to Grassy Narrows (no mining, no logging, no nuclear waste)
- Support Grassy Narrows in restoring their way of life and wellness

Instead of focusing on the rightful demands of the organizers of the protest, Doug Ford has chosen to divert attention to the presence of Toronto public school students hearing some pro-Palestinian chants at the event. He has taken swift action, not to address the concerns of the people of Grassy Narrows, but to order an investigation of the Toronto District School Board's policies on field trips.

This has allowed him to effectively capture the attention of the media on school trip policies instead of a decades long humanitarian crisis in our province. The Circle for Reconciliation and Justice is inviting you to join the people of Grassy Narrows in their search for justice. If you are interested, here is what you can do:

- ✓ Contact your local MPP and echo the demands of the Grassy Narrows First Nation. You can find your MPP at: <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current#views-exposed-form-current-members-current-members-grid>
- ✓ Sign the CRJ's letter addressing Doug Ford. If your congregation does not have a newsletter you can access the letter at <https://easternsynod.org/circle-for-reconciliation-and-justice/>

Visit <https://freegrassy.net/> to learn more and donate if you are able.

Thank you from the Eastern Synod Circle for Reconciliation and Justice. Please reach out to us if you wish to learn more about what the CRJ does or join our team.

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

NOVEMBER 2024	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS (DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$4,010.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	219.34		
AMMS PROPERTY TAX	1,233.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	50.75		
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$9,588.09	\$7,284.38	\$2,303.71
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$110,180.11	\$105,202.28	\$4,977.83
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT NOVEMBER 30, 2024			47,529.40
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT THE END OF NOVEMBER			176,488.47
SCOTIA BANK NON REDEEMABLE GIC AT 5% MATURING AUGUST 28, 2025			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer