

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pastor Jordan Smith • 416-356-3505 • revjordansmith@gmail.com

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Submissions 15th of the month
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A Life Filled with Movement

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (MATTHEW 2:13-15, NIV)

This passage, which is the assigned Gospel for the First Sunday after Christmas, stands in stark contrast to those images that many of us are thinking about as we continue to celebrate the Christmas season. As Christmas Eve fades into the distance, and we settle into the winter months, our minds may still be thinking of silent nights, calm mangers, and shepherds tending their flocks.

But we are quickly reminded that Jesus' birth does not bring about a time of peace and relaxation. For those shepherds it brought the fearful appearance of angels. For the magi Jesus' birth led to a long journey of discovery. And for the male children born during that time, the birth of the world's king brought forth untold tragedy at the order of Herod.

In the midst of this, Jesus' family escapes to Egypt, seeking shelter in a foreign land, the land from which their ancestors had emerged centuries earlier. God's people are a people who are on the move. Abraham is called to a new land filled with milk and honey. Under Joseph's guidance, Jacob and family travel to Egypt to escape hunger. Guided by a pillar of cloud during the day and fire during the night, Moses leads Israel into the wilderness for their forty-year sojourn. The Holy Family's escape to Egypt is yet another instance of God showing the way for people to go – whether by the power of angels, visions, or signs.

The need to flee or travel for safety is an experience that so many around the world continue to experience in their lifetimes. Whether caused by war, environmental change, or due to persecution, people are driven from their homes every day. And there are those who remain in their homes, but feel lost and disconnected due to broken relationships, mental health challenges, or socio-economic circumstances.

Matthew's gospel reminds us that God has come to be with those who are wandering and lost, for God incarnate as Jesus was also with a family who was wandering and lost. Wherever you find yourself this January, whether celebrating or lamenting, know that Jesus has walked in this world, to feel your joy and to feel your pain. May you sense his presence as it is revealed to the world, as a continued epiphany to all the nations.

Pastor Jordan Smith

JANUARY CALENDAR

2023

SUNDAY JANUARY 1

12:00 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Jordan Smith
(In-person & Zoom)



FRIDAY JANUARY 6

10:00-11:30 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 8

12:00 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Jordan Smith
(In-person & Zoom)

THURSDAY JANUARY 12

7:15 p.m. Council Meeting

SUNDAY JANUARY 15

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion Service
Guest Pastor Hilla Lahtinen
(In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 22

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion Service
Guest Pastor Rev. Doug Reble,
Assistant to the Bishop
(In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY JANUARY 29

10:00 a.m. Lay Led Service (Zoom)

Zoom Link to EPIPHANY meetings

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)
[pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)
Meeting ID: 989 080 0583 Passcode: 095565

Or by phone following the prompts:

+1 647 374 4685 Canada
Meeting ID: 989 080 0583 Passcode: 095565



Coming in February!

Please circle your calendar for our **ANNUAL MEETING** on **Sunday February 26** after the Worship Service!

Helen Elise Heard

DECEMBER 3, 1920 – DECEMBER 2, 2022

A day before her 102nd birthday, our dear Helen, longtime faithful friend and member of Epiphany, passed away peacefully in her sleep at Kipling Acres.

Her funeral took place December 10 at McDougall and Brown with interment of ashes at Resthaven Memorial Gardens.

- On Sunday January 22 at 10 a.m., our guest Pastor will be Rev. Doug Reble, Assistant to the Bishop. Rev. Reble will be acknowledging our Benevolence contributions to the Eastern Synod during his visit. Please come join us in person or on Zoom for our Holy Communion Service on this special Sunday at Epiphany.
- Pastor Jordan Smith is on vacation January 9-15, but he will be with us at 12 noon on January 1 and 8. Pastor Hilla Lahtinen will be presiding on January 15 at 10 a.m. with Holy Communion. January 29 will be a Lay Led Service.
- Please contact Pastor Ralph Carl at 416-532-8591 or pastor@firstelc.ca for any pastoral emergencies while Pastor Jordan is on vacation.

Our Seniors

I would like to wish all our seniors a **HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR.**

We all had a great time at our Christmas luncheon on December 3rd.

15 seniors were present.

The meal of Schnitzel, Potatoes, Red Cabbage and Sauerkraut from Vienna Meats was delicious and enjoyed by all.

A special **THANK YOU** to all the elves who helped me make this a successful day.

God bless you all.

Ute Wentzel



So, how good is your memory? I imagine most of us would agree that having a good memory is important. I also imagine most of us would be happy to improve our memories, or at the least, maintain our ability to remember things. And, it seems, the importance of managing our memory has been borne out by the many studies on the subject.

MEMORY

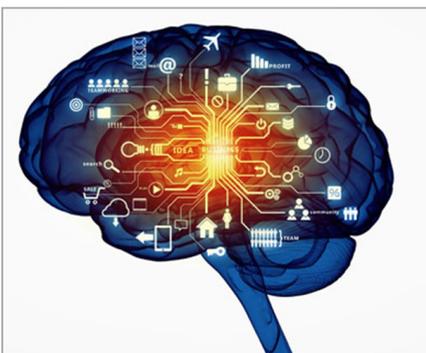
Psalmist doesn't say much about how this might happen. Modern science, on the other hand, is infinitely curious about what we do and don't recall, and what there is to be learned about that.



With the question about memory in mind, let me tell you something about my husband, an accountant whose occupation requires him to know a thing or two about numbers. Curiously, though, there are some numbers that he just does not remember. Yes, this is quite true. My husband does not remember telephone numbers! Conversely, as a professed lover of words, I can remember the telephone number from my childhood home. I committed it to memory by repeating it to myself, over and over, and to this day, I can draw it out of my memory. It is this issue of memory and remembering that we find in Scriptures, which makes the concern with memory both old and new.



Memory, quite simply, is the process of retaining information over a period of time, and most of us would agree it can be a marvellous tool. Think about the trivia champions on Jeopardy who turn their good memories into money! Or think about strong "procedural" memories, what we call motor skills, such as our organist's capacity for playing the organ,



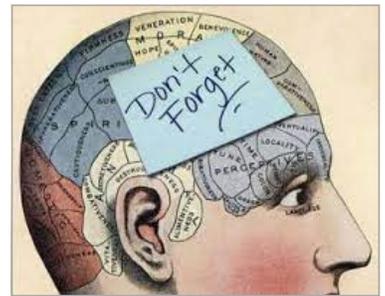
remembering where to place his fingers and feet. Or even more simply, think about your ability to walk somewhere, or to sit down: we just "remember" how to do it! Are we

not marvellously made? Yet, how is it we remember some things and not others?

In Psalm 111, the writer tells us that God will "cause [his] wonders to be remembered." However, the ancient

As science explains, memory is a rather complicated matter, but we now have more understanding about the reasons we do – or do not – remember something. Remembering, though, is clearly important from a Biblical perspective. According to a Bible word-finder I checked, the word "remember" appears in the Bible over 230 times, while the word "forget" is used only 64 times.

Let's consider the opposite of remember, or what it is to forget. According to science, there are a few quantifiable reasons why our memory fails us, why we forget something. There are the big reasons, of course, such as trauma that creates amnesia, or a tumor that damages the part of the brain responsible for memory. Less traumatically, we might sometimes feel that what we want to retrieve from our memory is just no longer there; or that it cannot be recalled, even though the shadow of it remains: we know something is there. Or there may be certain parts of an event or situation that you can recall, but not everything. Or, that "something" is on the tip of your tongue, but it just won't come forward out of your memory.



When we have trouble retrieving a memory, sometimes a particular cue will help. For example, you may not remember the name of someone until you are reminded of the event where you met, or that their name begins with the letter L. This way of remembering is effective because the cue or clue was strong when the memory was made. In a very real example, I remember being in the waiting room at Sick Kids Hospital, trying to remember something to offer comfort while waiting for our son to be out of surgery. It wasn't until I mentally hummed a bit of the tune, which I could remember, that the words of the liturgy and the verses of some special hymns came back to my memory.

There are times when a memory is not fully realized. Think about the money we use; can you draw all the details from the back of a dime from memory? If you are like me, perhaps not; we likely remember just enough to distinguish a dime from the other coins we use. Or sometimes a new memory is similar enough to an older one that it makes the older one harder to remember; it's somewhat buried under the new one. Or, conversely, the new memory may be hard to remember because of the strength of the old one. For example, if you know the rules for rugby well, you might have trouble remembering the rules of football because it conflicts with your older memory.

That's the "forget" aspect of memory. Admittedly, these episodes of poor memory can be annoying, or perhaps even upsetting. And indeed, the Bible reminds us that there are things we should NOT forget, like the Ten Commandments, or especially, that we are unconditionally loved. The writer of Psalm 111 tells us we are not to forget the great works of God, the tangible things like mountains and oceans, food and property, but also to not forget the intangible things like God's promises (or covenants). According to the psalmist, these things need to be "pondered" to be remembered. In other words, we need to spend time thinking about these things, both within ourselves and in community, through meditation, prayer, and celebration.



Of course, science explains this exercise and its outcome with the phrase, "neuroplasticity." This process is how researchers from Harvard University explain how the brain adapts, even in middle and old age. The explanation, and I am grossly simplifying the study here, is that connections, or pathways in our brains, are created each time we think, feel, or do something. So, the more travelled the pathway, the stronger the memory. Consider a habit, for example. Babies learn to walk after many attempts, and failures, but they eventually create a mind-pathway that means we rarely consider walking as a motor skill memory, we simply DO it. In the same way, any habit is a well-travelled neural pathway, so our brains find these things easy to do, to feel, or to navigate. So, based on this evidence, the key to making a new habit, or memory, is repetition. New thoughts, new skills carve out new pathways, and with practice, they are reinforced and become easier to do again. Old pathways, or old ideas or activities that get used less often, will weaken and may even be "forgotten."

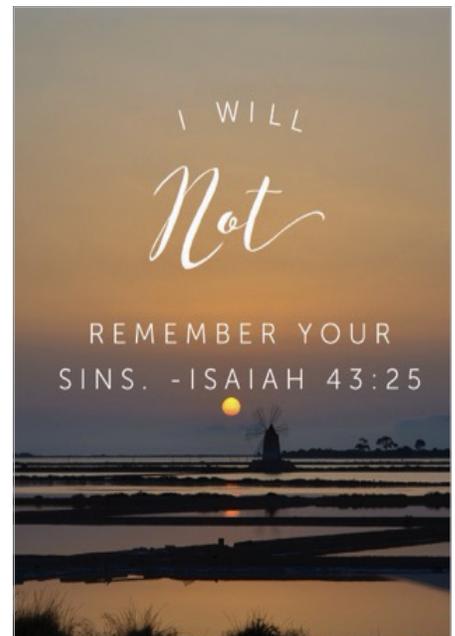
What I find most encouraging about this study is the very simple point that you can rewire your brain just by thinking! We are physically capable of changing our brains. In other words, if I want to learn to remember a new hymn, to recall the words of a psalm, I can train myself to do so.

So, does changing our brain help us be less forgetful? Why do we focus on having a good memory? Perhaps

somewhat surprisingly, a recent report from researchers at the University of Toronto and the Hospital for Sick Children says that forgetting matters just as much as remembering! The researchers point out that we live in a constantly changing world, and informational memories can become outdated and no longer useful to us. The conclusion is that remembering large amounts of data makes it too difficult to prioritize the significant information we need in decision-making. Their point is that if we are working with "multiple conflicting memories," we will find it harder to make informed or helpful decisions. In other words, it is important to pick and choose between our reliable or relevant memories, and decide what is truly worth keeping, and what is worth forgetting.

This, I think, is what the Bible tells us God does. There are twelve significant passages in the Bible that make clear to us that God does NOT remember our sins: five passages in the Old Testament, and seven in the New Testament. Of those, let me draw your attention to Isaiah 43:25. Here the prophet speaks for God, saying, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." God is not having a lapse of memory but is exercising what we might understand as intentional forgetting.

I find echoes of this in Psalm 111, but from the perspective of what is important to remember. The psalmist says God "remembers forever his covenant" or promise to us, in faithfulness and



justice. And most clearly, God "sent redemption to [his] people," through Jesus Christ. This reminder is especially helpful, I believe, because we don't always get it right and need support, or cues to help remember that God's redeeming love is always there for us. Some cues we can draw on may be our baptism or confirmation, but I suspect they may be over-written by what we consider our current or significant memories. So, what can we do to help us really remember the great, good news? The psalm writer encourages us to "ponder," or remember God's great works: the mountains, the oceans, even the rest of mankind, good cues to remember our creator. Let me take this a step further; since we are "made in

the image of God" (Gen. 1:27), let me boldly suggest that if God chooses to not remember our sins, then our brains can also "forget" things, or prioritize our memories, so we can focus on remembering those things that keep our hearts and minds on Christ Jesus. We can train our brains to make a pathway that is habitually focussed on what is "holy and awesome." We can make a new mind/memory pathway, a new habit that can help us refocus our hearts and minds on the grace and mercy of God.



Oh! Remember what I told you about my husband? When I learned he doesn't remember telephone numbers, I asked him, "Why"? He told me he saw no reason to keep that detail in his brain when there are so many ways to get a number when he wants it. Good decision; more space for other memories.

If I use my husband's number-forgetting as an example, perhaps we too, can forget what makes us unhappy, or stifled, or less loving, for our own sake, to free up the pathways in our brains. This, I believe, is what God intends for us, which is to have a healthy brain, and a fulfilling life. It is to have a brain that forgets enough to give us strong decision-making powers to be bold in our faith, to be bold in loving. So, pray on it, and forget.

Amen.

Denise Dennis

TREASURER'S REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$3,010.00	\$8,986.00	
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	808.85		
AMMS PROPERTY TAX	1,046.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	430.44		
TREE REMOVAL		4,576.50	
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$9,370.29	\$13,562.50	(\$4,192.21)
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$118,449.95	\$131,681.93	(\$13,231.98)
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT NOVEMBER 30, 2022			16,434.69
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT NOVEMBER 30, 2022			140,356.39
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2023			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

CHAIRPERSONS	(C) COUNCIL MEMBER
Council Chair	Ron Heino (C)
Council Vice-Chair	Denise Dennis (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Greg Furan (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Gord Munro (C)
Education Committee	Open
Finance Committee	Geoff Crewe
Property Committee	Gordon Vollmer (C)
Seniors Group	Ute Wentzel
Stewardship Committee	Geoff Crewe
Worship & Music	Marg Crewe
Visioning Chair	Gordon Vollmer (C)

COMMITTEE REPS/LIAISON

Advertising Coordinator	Nalini Badley
AMMS Liaison	Ron Heino (C) (Fred Kilian)
Council Secretary	Pat Bramley (C)
ELW	Sigrid Engler
Envelope Secretary	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry	Geoff Crewe
Visioning Liaison	Gordon Vollmer (C)
Spiritual Society Liaison	Fred Kilian
Treasurer	Nalini Badley
Worship & Music Liaison	Open




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