



# The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

**EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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## Are We Prepared?



**... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

*(ROMANS 5:8, ESV)*

**I**f you have only had a chance to get to know me during Sunday morning services or in social settings, you likely are not aware that I am a list maker. Whether it is preparing for future Bible studies or identifying tasks in planning for the national youth gathering or even remembering to change the furnace filter every few months, almost everything I need to accomplish gets written down as part of a list on a piece of paper or in my task manager application on the phone.

While this helps me keep organized and focused during the busy times of the year, I still end up not getting everything done that ends up on the lists. This might be how your relationship with your spiritual life might feel like. You have down on your list to attend church on Sundays, to offer grace before meals, and to pray before bed. And now, as we find ourselves in the season of Lent, our spiritual to-do list has gotten even longer. On Ash Wednesday we were invited into the discipline of Lent – self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving, and works of love – and these disciplines might sound like a list of items that need to be checked off before Easter will arrive. This invitation to reflect on our lives as we journey toward Holy Week may lead us to think we must make ourselves worthy before we stand in awe of Jesus' death and resurrection.

This is why I am drawn to Romans 5:8, quoted above, which is read on the Third Sunday in Lent. In this verse, Paul reminds the church that Christ did not die for us because we have made ourselves worthy, but because we were and are still sinners.

There is no list of tasks to be accomplished that will make us worthy of this great act of love. There is nothing that we can offer back to equal God's love for us. We are constantly invited to live our lives as baptized people in thanksgiving to God but are also constantly reminded that we assume this identity because of God's grace. Easter's arrival is not dependent on me completing my spiritual to-do list.

With all of this in mind, I will choose to add one more item to my to-do list in preparation for Holy Week. Over these final weeks of Lent, I will take time to pray and offer thanks to God that I, a sinner, am loved and that Christ died for us all.

**Pastor Jordan Smith**

## MARCH CALENDAR

### SUNDAY MARCH 5

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

### WEDNESDAY MARCH 8

7:15 p.m. Council Meeting

### FRIDAY MARCH 10

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

### SUNDAY MARCH 12

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

### SUNDAY MARCH 19

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

### FRIDAY MARCH 24

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

### SUNDAY MARCH 26

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

### Scent Free Sanctuary

Please refrain from wearing scented products to church. Sensitive noses thank you.

### 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



## World Day of Prayer 2023

ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE

Thursday March 2 • 7 pm

at St. Joseph's Parish

200 Morrish Road,  
Scarborough, Ontario

All are welcome!

Dear Friends,

**“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?”**

*(FEEDING OF THE 5000  
– JOHN 6:9, NRSV)*



**Eastern Synod**  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The story of the Feeding of the 5000 is a reminder of how good and gracious and generous our God is. God takes the small offering of a child and does something great and miraculous with it. We are so blessed to be the recipients of God's graciousness and abundant generosity throughout our lives. God is good.

We have just closed the books on the fiscal year of 2022, and we wanted to write to you to thank you for your continued financial support and generosity. Thank you for your loving and faithful expression of stewardship and generous giving which continues to shine through this ongoing, challenging time. We feel your partnership and we are so very grateful for your financial support, and indeed, for all the ways you support our ministry together.

At the close of the financial books for this past year, benevolence receipts were 5.3% (approximately \$69,000) lower in 2022, compared to 2021. The Synod had budgeted for a 2% decrease, so this represents a steeper decline in benevolence offerings than what was anticipated. This is difficult news and a trend we will watch carefully, but at the same time, we do not lose hope. Generosity is a spiritual discipline and we continue to live-out a grateful response to our generous and loving God no matter the circumstance. If the offerings of five loaves and two fish can be turned into a feast to feed thousands, then we remain steadfast in our faith that God will continue to act abundantly with our offerings too. For your ongoing faithfulness, generosity, and partnership in ministry, we remain so, so grateful.

We would also like to remind you that you can revisit the different ministry areas that your benevolence offerings help to support by viewing again **Our Ministry Together** – a series of short videos intended to highlight and celebrate areas of our common mission across the Eastern Synod. More video stories exploring ministry and mission from around the Eastern Synod will be made available to view soon. In the meantime, please also refer to the Stewardship and Generous Giving hub on the Synod website where you will find articles and blog postings to support the stewardship and generous giving ministry in your context.

We would ask that you share this letter with your congregation(s) and supporters, and convey to them our deep gratitude for the ministry and the partnership we share. In a year that presented many challenges, we remain thankful for your faithfulness and generosity.

**Faithfully yours,**  
**Bishop Michael J. Pryse and**  
**Keith Myra, Treasurer**



**I**N the name of Jesus Christ. The Light of the World, grace to you and peace. Whenever I read the beginning chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, I can't help thinking this is a curious way to begin a gospel. There could be other ways for Matthew to tell the story of Jesus. For instance, after Jesus' baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Matthew could have recorded a sermon by Jesus. Matthew could have begun by giving us Jesus' first sermon. And then he could have recorded another sermon of Jesus and another. But Matthew doesn't do that.

Of course, the significance of Jesus is not simply in his words. But also in his deeds. So Matthew could have begun and told about a sermon Jesus preached, followed by some healing that Jesus performed, some miraculous act of compassion. But Matthew doesn't do that either. No, right at the beginning, the first thing Matthew has Jesus do is call people to help him in his work.

He sees some people fishing and, calling them by name, says to them: "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Isn't that interesting? Jesus is the Son of God, we found out about that with a voice at his baptism, but he is not the Lone Ranger. Even though he is the Son of God, that doesn't mean that he goes it alone. He does not work alone. He calls people to help him bring in the kingdom. Let me repeat that. He calls people to help him bring in the kingdom.

You and I are here today in this church as contemporary disciples of Jesus. Just like these sons of Zebedee, you and I have been called to help Jesus catch people, to throw out the wide gospel net and bring people into the kingdom, this new family that Jesus is forming.

Now here is my question. "Have you caught anybody lately?" "Have I caught anybody lately?" If you are a member of a mainline Protestant denomination in North America; which, by the way, includes the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Canada, there is a good chance that you and I haven't. We mainliners, that is what the fundamentalist churches call us, have been in relentless decline for some time. We seem to have gotten out of the fishing business.

The results are all around us. Somewhat disastrous results as more and more churches are closing.

It may seem so ordinary, so unspectacular a way to begin a gospel. Just going out and talking to these fishers, telling them that he is going to teach them to fish for people. And yet, if you think about it, I expect this is the way you and I were brought into the kingdom – in utterly unspectacular ways.

Now I know that there may be some people here this morning who became a Christian in some blinding flash of light, in some mountaintop experience, in some dramatic moment. However, I expect that most of us got here through less spectacular, but by no less divine means. Most of us were brought here or some other church by loving parents or grandparents. We cannot remember when we haven't been attached to the church. Our parents made us come to church, out of habit. Don't knock habit!

Others were invited here by a friend who sat next to us at a desk in the office, or someone we talked to at school, or a friend in a club who invited us here.

Have you reeled anyone in lately? Have I? Do you know that when people are asked why they are not active in a church, the primary reason given is "no one ever asked me!" Not "I can't stand the pastor", though I suppose that is true for some, but "no one ever asked me!" That may sound rather unspectacular, and I guess it is, but nevertheless, that is the main reason they give.

They don't say, "Well I would come to church, but I have some real misgivings about a couple of lines in the Apostles' Creed." They don't say, "The reason I don't come to church is I have some hermeneutical disagreements with the church's interpretation of Scripture."

Nothing spectacular. Just the ordinary little phrase, "No one ever invited me."

So, my friends, when is the last time you have been fishing with Jesus? When is the last time I was fishing with Jesus?

I know how some may probably respond to such a question. One might say, "Well in this country religion is a private matter. Personal. It is all right to be religious, as long as we keep it within these four walls and don't go public with it." Except, if that is the way religion has to be in this country, then we can't be Christian. You can look in the gospel and see that Christianity is not exclusively private or personal. It is very public. Here is Jesus walking along a road, calling people at work, going to where they are, intruding, calling them to become part of the kingdom.

Or one might say, "Well I don't want to be pushy. I don't want to force my faith on anybody else. I don't think that religion should be something you wear on your sleeve." And yet, if we are honest, this may not be a sign of our great humility. Rather, we know, it is a risk to intrude into anyone else's life and to try to talk with them about important matters.

Face it, you go fishing with Jesus and you don't know the sort of response you might receive. We North Americans tend to keep life compartmentalized, hermetically sealed. Over here we are religious, over there we go to work. We separate things out, and as we see in today's text Jesus did not keep things separate. He pushed out to where people worked and met them there; calling them in terms they could understand.

Or one might say, "I am just not that good at talking about my faith. I don't know the right words to use." I do think that the church could do a much better job at equipping our people to share their faith, in words. But note that in our Scripture Jesus doesn't ask them to go out and preach. He doesn't tell them, "Come follow me and I will teach you to have intelligent religious discussions."

Rather, his expectations are much more active, earthly, and mundane. He says to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." He builds on something they already know how to do. He turns their mundane fishing abilities into a great adventure for the kingdom of God.

Again, consider how you got to be here. I expect that most of us came, not as the result of some brilliant sermon – oh how I would like that to be! – but rather from a more ordinary, mundane and unspectacular way. Someone brought you or someone invited you.

At the same time, it is so easy to slip out of the fishing business, to simply bed down here with our own members, to keep house, to evaluate the church exclusively on how church looks from the inside, rather than how it looks on the outside.

A few years ago, while on my holidays, I visited a church to worship, a rare and appreciated opportunity to sit in a pew and worship and not have to lead it. I pulled into the parking lot on Sunday and proceeded to try all the doors. Locked, even though there were cars in the parking lot. I jiggled all the doors and finally found one open and unlocked. I take that as a parable.

I am sure everyone who is a member of that church knows how to get into that building. But that is just the problem. The church more often than not has been run with purely internal considerations rather than external. Perhaps we all need to take a look at our church, this church, any church, not from how it appears to those on the inside, but how it appears to someone on the outside.

My sisters and brothers in faith, my fellow fishers. There are two things I want you to think about. I want you to look at how you got here, how Jesus came to you, as he came to his first disciples, calling you by name and inviting you to join up. I also want you to think about how you can bring Jesus to someone else. Not how you can bring someone else to church. But how can you bring Jesus to them. That's how the kingdom is built.

In the name of the God who loves us all. Amen.



### TREASURER'S REPORT

<b>JANUARY 2023</b>	<b>RECEIVED</b>	<b>SPENT</b>	<b>SURPLUS(DEFICIT)</b>
OFFERINGS	\$3,965.00		
SPIRITUAL SOCIETY PARKING	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	449.45		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	109.35		
<b>CURRENT MONTH TOTALS</b>	<b>\$10,098.80</b>	<b>\$7,816.04</b>	<b>\$2,282.76</b>
<b>YEAR TO DATE TOTALS</b>	<b>\$10,098.80</b>	<b>\$7,816.04</b>	<b>\$2,282.76</b>
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT JANUARY 31, 2023			26,092.40
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT JANUARY 31, 2023			136,110.28
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2023			30,000.00

*Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer*

### COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

<b>CHAIRPERSONS</b>	<b>(C) COUNCIL MEMBER</b>
Council Chair	Open
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	Open (Fred Kilian)
Council Secretary	Open
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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