

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Submissions 15th of the month

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A Meal of Fellowship

“When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.” They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?” “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me.”

(MARK 14:17-20, NIV)

These words from the Gospel of Mark are some of the most difficult to read during the Lenten season. Jesus, while eating dinner with the twelve people who are his closest friends and his followers, acknowledges the uncomfortable truth that one of those present will betray him.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which falls on February 14th this year. Whether or not you choose to spend a portion of your Valentine’s Day at church receiving ashes on your forehead, for me this dual celebration in the middle of the month brings together two very important realities of Jesus’ ministry. In his teachings, Jesus demonstrates both the need for repentance, and the need to love others.

His ministry was about recognizing the need for repentance. He drives out the demons that torment people, he forgives the sins of the man lowered on a mat through the roof, he reaches out to the tax collectors and tells them to change their sinful ways, and “follow me”.

His ministry was also about love. He heals on the day when the law says to rest, he feeds those who were hungry, he tells the teachers of the law that the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbour as yourself.

In that moment when Jesus is reclining at the table with the twelve, including the one who will betray him, his ministry of recognizing the need for repentance, and his ministry of love, come together. For rather than excluding the one who will turn against him, and rather than rejecting the one who will deny knowing him, he brings the twelve together. They break bread. They drink from the cup. They sing a hymn. The community gathers and practices fellowship.

Perhaps this is why during Lent so many congregations hold a weekly soup and bread meal, because around the table is where Jesus introduces what is next for the disciples. Around the table, is where the reality of his ministry becomes clear. That people will fall, hurt each other, and will reject Jesus. And yet he responds with love.

May that be our guiding principle during this Lenten season. May we find ways to gather with others, even when we are hurting. May we extend fellowship to those who we think don’t deserve it. May we love like Jesus.

Pastor Jordan Smith

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 2

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (GREEN)

12:00 noon Service of the Word

Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 8

7:15 p.m. Council Meeting

(In-person & Zoom)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9

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

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD (WHITE)

12:00 noon Holy Communion Service

Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14

ASH WEDNESDAY (PURPLE)

6:00 p.m. Soup Supper

6:45 p.m. Holy Communion Service

Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 18

LENT 1 (PURPLE)

12:00 noon Service of the Word

Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23

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

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 25

LENT 2 (PURPLE)

10:45 a.m. ANNUAL MEETING

12:00 noon Service of the Word

Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

Zoom Link to EPIPHANY LUTHERAN

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBbnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)

[pwd=R05md05jWjZBbnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBbnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)

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

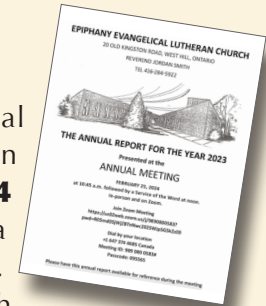
Notice of 2024 Annual Meeting

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on **Sunday February 25, 2024 at 10:45 a.m.** followed by a Service of the Word at 12 noon.

The meeting will be held both in-person at the church and on-line with Zoom.

The 2023 Annual Report contains the meeting agenda as well as supporting materials. It will be distributed well in advance of the meeting, both electronically and as hard copy to those who customarily receive paper copies of the Morningstar. We encourage utilizing the electronic version as the "green" option, however hard copy will be made available to anyone upon request.

Please circle the date on your calendars. Participation in this important meeting is your opportunity for input into the key decisions affecting your Church in 2024 and beyond.



Epiphany 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. The next date is scheduled for March 21. 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 these links if you wish to hear her devotion.

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

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

*Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives,
is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see.*

— CORRIE TEN BOOM —

LONG AGO, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT



CONFIDENT



POTENTIALLY AGGRESSIVE

The high tail can represent a confident cat or a potentially aggressive cat depending on the scenario.

There are many physical cues of a cat's mood, but their meaning can vary depending on the context. For example, one of the most reliable signs of a confident cat is a tail that's lifted vertically, high in the air. Most of the time, this tail position indicates that the cat feels comfortable and open to interaction. However, in certain contexts – like warding off a strange cat in his own territory – a high tail can also indicate a willingness to attack. When considering context, it's important to try to see things from your cat's perspective. People often approach cats with good intentions, get scratched or bitten, and then blame the cat for being mean-tempered. What's missing is an assessment of how the cat might have perceived the gesture.

We have all experienced instances of failure in communication, some significant, some annoying, some perhaps amusing. In hindsight I am amused by an episode at Red Lobster, years ago, when my salad arrived with the wrong dressing. The waitress was somewhat annoying in her exchanges with us and so I already had my back up. "I ordered ranch dressing" I said. "No, you ordered French dressing" she said. "The names sound sort of the same and it is a bit noisy in here, but I definitely ordered Ranch dressing" I said, in an aggravated voice. "No, you definitely ordered French dressing" "No, I hate French dressing! I wouldn't have ordered it!" Eventually she took the salad away and returned with a new one, "firmly" placing it in front of me. Luckily it tasted unadulterated.

Sometimes a failure of communication has tragic consequences. Israeli soldiers recently shot and killed two Israeli



hostages who had escaped captivity. They were waving white cloths and were unarmed. Not only was their communication signal ignored, but the fact that they were young, unarmed men also supported claims that unarmed Palestinians are also killed and injured.

Of course, communication isn't just the words we say. Our tone of voice is important, as is the surrounding environment, use of eye contact, gestures, even smells. Talking to someone who smells of alcohol, for example, might help to make sense of the way a conversation progresses.

The message that we try to communicate is only part of the story – the other part is what the receiver makes of the message. And that is affected by many things as well. Feeling fearful or defensive about what we think the other person is saying or will say; our level of knowledge about what is being discussed, our assumptions, beliefs and biases, how close the person is standing, our mood and, of course, how well we hear. No wonder peace talks, marriage counseling and labour contract negotiations are so fragile, so contracted, so painstaking.

When communication is successful, there can be great benefit. Mutual understanding, love, and growth can happen when we demonstrate we are being genuine and not hiding anything. Friendships can develop, the air can be cleared after an argument or misunderstanding, help can be given, explanations and instruction can get a job done. You can show that you accept and respect the person as they truly are, warts and all; you can work to understand the whole message of what the person is communicating, by trying to understand their inner world.

How has God communicated with people and how is God communicating with us? A passage from Romans reads: "Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son."

What are the various and many ways God had spoken to His people before the birth of Jesus?

Early Bible stories describe God speaking directly to people. Not usually face to face, as in this Sistine



Chapel painting by Michelangelo: the creation of Adam, but definitely a reaching out through dreams, commands and the laws as given to Moses. God also handpicked kings, judges and prophets to rule over and preach to his people. They, in turn, received guidance and actual words to speak from God. When they went off script, bad things usually happened. The communication tended to be God speaking with authority and humans asking for guidance or compassion, or to be relieved of their duties, at least when they were being faithful to their covenant with God.

The time between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the Gospels of the New Testament is called 'The Intertestamental Period.' After the time of the prophets, the last being Malachi, there was a drought in this kind of direct communication and authority given by God. The intertestamental period between Malachi and the preaching of John the Baptist was about 450 years and no significant prophets were recorded during that time. Because of this communication vacuum, several groups or factions developed and became prominent. There were Pharisees and Sadducees who often argued over what parts of scripture should be accepted and how it should be interpreted. The Old Testament Scriptures had been written in Hebrew, but now, subsequent to the captivity and exile of the Israelites in Babylon, people spoke Aramaic or Greek so the words had to be translated and taught. Many did not trust the priests and Levites to give the correct guidance and so Scribes became powerful teachers of the law. They were educated and provided written copies of Scriptures to synagogues. In this environment, adherence to the laws of Moses and the interpretation of prophecies about the coming Messiah became entrenched which later led many to be suspicious of Jesus and confrontational about His teachings.

Then, after 450 years of religious interpretation by committee the silence was broken. Chapters one and two of Luke describe an awakening of prophecy, a new era of revelation. In Luke chapter 1 an angel

announced the birth of John to Zechariah; then an angel appeared to Mary, announcing the birth of Jesus. Mary, filled with the spirit, responded with the words of the Magnificat; Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth who was inspired to speak words of joy, and the heavenly hosts filled the sky and announced the birth of Jesus to the Shepherds.



Today's Gospel text is from Luke chapter 2. Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving on the birth of their first son and for the rites of circumcision and purification. There, at the temple, an old man named Simeon, understood; had somehow been informed by God, that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took him in his arms. This baby was the Saviour, the long-awaited Messiah. Then, at peace, Simeon spoke the beautiful words of the Nunc Dimittis – "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."



There was also a woman named Anna, described as a prophetess, in the temple. She was very faithful in her worship, praying and fasting. She was very old; either 84 years old or a widow for 84 years depending on the Biblical translation. A curious fact is that she was a member of the tribe of Asher. So some members of what we consider the 10 lost tribes of Israel, were present in society. We don't know Anna's prophetic words, only that she spoke them.

But there was an even more gracious and powerful communication from God occurring when Jesus was born.

Artists have often idealized the appearance of the infant Jesus, and Mary too. He is handsome, often fair, precocious, haloed – even powerful looking, as if he



has secret knowledge and supernatural ability. Why, I am not sure. It diminishes the true man portion of the infant, our shared humanity. It can be hard to imagine, to take in the implications of the fact, that this was a real baby, born in the usual messy way, helpless, crying, dependent on others for food, love and comfort.



I liked the way the significance of Jesus' birth is described as communication in "Love in Flesh and Bone," a book of

sermons by Amy Richter and Joseph Pagano.

"The message of Christmas is this: God found a new way to say exactly the right thing. The letter to the Hebrews says, "Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by a Son." A baby. The Son of God, the Word, co-eternal with God and before all time became incarnate, took on flesh, real flesh, a baby's flesh. The one at whose command all things came to be... became for us an inarticulate infant... At Christmas, God chose to let his Word have to learn to crawl first. The one accustomed to the praise of countless throngs of angels singing their unending hymn, "Holy, holy, holy," is now surrounded by a new music, a mother's "Hush, sweet baby, hush."

And what does a baby say? Actually, not much. Without the power of speech they are, in fact, rather limited. But they do say two very important things: "here I am," and, "I need you." And God, through this baby is giving us that message: "here I am," and "I need you."



"...Notice we don't say: someday the child will grow to become an adult who will walk and talk and love and live and say things and do things that

will show us just how much God loves us. All of this is true, of course. But that is not this message. What we celebrate in the Christmas season is that this baby, The Word made flesh, was already a completely formed message of love, full of grace and truth toward us. "Here I am. I am with you. I am for you. I am trusting myself to you. I need you."

There is much to think about in what is communicated in the birth of a baby. Babies do not judge. Babies are not scary, they charm us. We are tender and nurturing toward them. God is coming to us in love, not in might and power. Be not afraid.

We are often inhibited in our communication because we are all too aware of our faults and failings; we feel vulnerable. And because we are afraid of messing up we don't live out our loving response to God's love. We think we are not talented enough, don't know enough, are not worthy enough to even try to minister. But this unimposing infant inspires love rather than fear. God accepts us as we are, mortal and fallible and so we can accept ourselves and accept others as God's imperfect but beloved children.

"How desperately God must love. Desperately enough to find a new way to say exactly the right thing which turns out to be: Here's how much I love you."

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

CHAIRPERSONS	(C) COUNCIL MEMBER
Council Chair	Geoff Crewe (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 (C)
Property Committee	Open
Seniors Group	Ute Wentzel
Stewardship Committee	Denise Dennis (C)
Worship & Music	Marg Crewe
Visioning Chair	Gordon Vollmer (C)
COMMITTEE REPS/LIAISON	
Advertising Coordinator	Nalini Badley
AMMS Liaison	Ron Heino
Council Secretary	Margaret Fler (C)
ELW	Sigrid Engler
Envelope Secretary	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry	Geoff Crewe (C)
Spiritual Society Liaison	Ron Heino
Treasurer	Nalini Badley

STEWARDSHIP AT EPIPHANY in 2024 will have a community focus.

Since housing is a key focus of our new mayor, many projects for shelters and supportive housing are being undertaken. Near Epiphany, there are two former motels, The Grand (4626 Kingston Road), and the Lido (4674 Kingston Road), that are being repurposed as housing. The Lido Motel currently serves as a shelter, a place of transition to more permanent housing.

The Grand motel renovation opened 22 supportive homes (studio apartments) dedicated to “people experiencing or at risk of homelessness including women, Indigenous residents, seniors, people with disabilities and others.”¹ Phase 2 (completion spring 2024) includes a new five-storey building using modular construction; the two spaces create 86 new homes with 24/7 on-site supports for residents provided by Fred Victor charitable social services.



¹ <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/4626-kingston-rd>

We at Epiphany have an opportunity to support our “new” neighbours in their new homes, helping ensure a smooth transition to the neighbourhood.

In addition, there are two other shelters that would also benefit from the prayers and support of our Epiphany family: Scarborough Village Residence (3306 Kingston Road) and the 705 Shelter (705 Progress Avenue). The Scarborough Village Residence is for seniors (55+), while the 705 Shelter is a pet-friendly shelter for men over 18. Both locations work to find permanent housing for the residents.

As needs are identified, they will be communicated to the members of Epiphany so that we can support these neighbours who are in transition. Watch for more information in *The Morningstar* or by email.

To begin, let us pray for the wellbeing of our neighbours, wherever they reside around us.

In faith and community, Denise Dennis

TREASURER’S REPORT

DECEMBER 2023	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$13,100.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	4,075.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	341.38		
AMMS PARSONAGE PROPERTY TAX	1,195.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL UTILITIES	833.22		
AMMS PARSONAGE INSURANCE	2,175.12		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	246.49		
INTEREST AND DIVIDEND INCOME	5,150.70		
CHANGE IN INVESTMENT INCOME	(1,521.37)		
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$25,595.54	\$12,291.65	\$13,303.89
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$145,574.71	\$128,549.21	\$17,025.50
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT DECEMBER 31, 2023			36,066.89
CIBC INVESTOR’S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT NOVEMBER 30, 2023			127,097.27
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2024			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer

CALL TO BOOK A TOUR TODAY!

647-931-1514 or EMAIL info.parkway@livinglivita.com



Livita
RETIREMENT RESIDENCES



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