

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Submissions 15th of the month
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Entering the Water

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.” (Exodus 14: 21-22, NIV)

This summer I, along with my family, have been regularly going to Woodbine Beach in the evening to enjoy some time by the water after hot days. We are fortunate in Toronto to have several beaches with clean water and nice sand. The waters of Lake Ontario are usually smooth by the shore, but occasionally we have some waves which toss us around a bit. Every time I'm at the beach I notice the different approaches people have to the water. There are the kids who dive right in, not hesitating at the chilly temperature. Other children (and adults) are more tentative, slowly stepping over the rocks, trying to avoid seaweed, and slowly getting used to being in an unfamiliar place.

During the fall our Old Testament readings will be coming from the book of Exodus. We will hear of the Israelites fleeing from Egypt and crossing the Red Sea. In these stories we also witness a variety of approaches to their journey and to the water.

Some exhibit fear of the army pursuing them, afraid of what is behind them and regretting the choice to leave the only home this generation had lived in. Others exhibit excitement of what lies ahead and of where God is leading them. However, all the Israelites exhibit trust and courage at the invitation to step onto dry land in that moment when Moses raises his hand to separate the Red Sea and tells them to walk between walls of water.

This is what we will reflect on during this coming season. We will think about what it is like to step into unknown and uncertain situations. We will pray about what it is like to trust God to provide as we enter new places. We will discuss the adventures which lie ahead of us that we didn't know we would experience.

I hope your summer has been filled with relaxation, but also excitement at exploring the world around you. I look forward to this journey of discovery continuing as we worship and learn together on Sunday mornings.

Pastor Jordan Smith



Small and simple, yet such a beautiful visual welcome as we enter the church (not available in winter)

Volunteer Recognition

“I love to get outside in the fresh air.”

“I love my church and want it to look nice/welcoming.”

“When I am out in nature, I marvel at God’s work and view it as a gift for us to enjoy and protect.”

“Well, there’s a lot of work which needs to be done and somebody has to do it ... let me see how I can contribute.”

I suspect these are among the reasons members have expressed to explain why they became involved in performing outdoor chores at Epiphany. As the calendar and our bodies tell us we are aging, we may truly find it more difficult to carry out our daily activities, even while we typically have more flexibility with our time. So, it is very much appreciated when people step up and volunteer to help their church in a way which both pleases them (because they are using their God-given talents and feeling a sense of accomplishment) and contributes to the congregation’s well-being. Without mentioning the church building, which is getting more and more susceptible to problems due to its age, the size of our outdoor property is substantial. It’s really too big to be maintained to a high standard by a few volunteers who have plenty of other things to do away from church. This has never discouraged Dorothea Cameron and Nalini Badley from creating and maintaining flower gardens and arrangements which beautify our church. Both have been expressing their stewardship of the church property for many years in this manner. They often tackle other outdoor jobs because they see that something needs to be done and they just do it. We are so grateful they are willing to share their talents and energy for our collective benefit. I also want to recognize Peter von Gemmingen, who has just stepped back after having served for so many years by cutting the lawn and keeping down the weeds (which grow like weeds!) around the perimeter of the property. Peter has indicated he is still willing to do this job on an occasional basis, as needed. Taking the wheel of the lawn tractor from Peter is Gord Munro who, despite assorted aches and pains, has seen an opportunity where he feels he can contribute something more to Epiphany. The tractor underwent a major repair/maintenance exercise at the start of the season and Gord has transitioned seamlessly into his new role. I say “seamlessly”, but it hasn’t been effortless, as Gord has worked some bugs out of both the lawn tractor and weed whacker by studying the operating manuals and applying his knowledge of how things work to his new job.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 3

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

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 8

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

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 10

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

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 14

7:15 p.m. Council Meeting
(In-person & Zoom)

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 17

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

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 22

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

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 24

12:00 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Jordan Smith (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)

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

Scent Free Sanctuary

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

I have been a member of Epiphany for just 15 years (as compared to many who have attended for 50+ years). In my time, I've felt a change as "more experienced" members have begun to have health issues, as their old friends have died and as fewer people attend church in general these days. Because our numbers and activities have decreased, we yearn for the good old days when our church was more vibrant and things got done because there was never an acute shortage of volunteer members to do them. Pastor Jordan's sermon of August 6/23 has been reprinted in this edition of *THE MORNINGSTAR*. I find it very encouraging and, if we take it to heart, it can inspire us to "live in an abundant way that cares for those around [us]." When you read it, think especially about how much we still have/can accomplish, even as an older, smaller group, if we take our inspiration from Jesus.

Geoff Crewe



A thorn between the roses. Left to right, Dorothea Cameron, Geoff Crewe and Nalini Badley take a break to pose with some of the tools of the trade with which they maintain the yard/gardens.



Gord Munro sits on his new toy, which he drives using only his left hand, as the right is permanently occupied, holding his coffee cup.

Visioning Committee Update

Greetings to all. I hope everyone is enjoying the summer.

As most should remember, in March we agreed to work with our neighbour, the Estonian Relief Committee (ERC) to explore the redevelopment of the church property.

The agreement gave the ERC permission to formulate a redevelopment plan that includes the church property and provides Epiphany with a new church facility, including a worship area, meeting rooms, offices and any other space needs we feel necessary to continue our mission at this location. As in any development plan it also requires ERC to arrange acceptable approvals and funding proposals from government agencies and banks or other financial resources.

In the meantime, we have moved forward and continued discussions with our current tenant, Absorbent Minds Montessori, who remain very interested in staying at this location in a new, expanded facility.

The Committee also met to discuss our future needs in terms of the amount of space we would need for our own use.

In general terms, we would require our own, private area, with a separate entrance, congregational use spaces and parking. The same could be said for the Montessori school. There will also, in all likelihood, be shared areas with ERC such as larger meeting rooms and full kitchen facilities.

At this point ERC is favouring a building constructed out of laminated timber. This has become a very popular construction style in the past few years and advances have been made to make it as safe or safer than traditional concrete, steel and brick methods. It is also seen to be a more sustainable and environmentally friendly building method.

The ERC proposal continues to include a long-term care facility, seniors retirement housing, health care services, food services, dining hall, meeting rooms and any other uses that would support ERC or ELC activity or could be used to provide needed social or commercial services to the surrounding community.

With respect to funding the development, ERC has been in discussion with a number of banks and other private sources of funds. Progress is being made, but they have found it slow, given a market of rising interest rates, inflation and a very busy development market.

Since government and public interest in long term care, seniors housing and rental housing in general remains very strong, ERC is confident that they will find the right financial partner to move forward.

Please note that before any final decision is made, there will be a congregational meeting called that would lead to approval of a development plan, if the plan is acceptable to the congregation.

Gordon Vollmer

Sermon preached by Pastor Jordan Smith on August 6, 2023. Gospel Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Over the past two weeks we have been hearing Jesus' parables that describe the kingdom of God. And we have been connecting those parables to how we understand how we are to live in that envisioned kingdom, and how this is lived out in the church.

Two weeks ago – we heard about the wheat and the weeds – where both grow in one field. The wheat being planted by God, the weeds by the enemy, and how both are left to grow until the harvest, until the time they will be separated.

And last week, the mustard seed. The smallest seed which grows into the greatest shrub. It is a plant that provides rest to the birds and shade for those around it. Harkening back to the prophetic visions of Jerusalem as a tree under which all nations were to gather, Jesus in his story provides a vision of what the kingdom, and the church, are to be like.

But now, there is a new challenge. Because Jesus did not receive a welcome response to these words. As he finished these parables he began teaching again in his hometown, but finds himself shunned from that place, unable to perform miracles because of their lack of faith.

Meanwhile, we are reminded that John the Baptist has been murdered by Herod, and as word of Jesus' ministry reach Herod's palace, he starts to wonder if this Jesus character is actually John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Jesus has found himself rejected by those in his hometown, and also viewed with extreme unease by government officials who fear for what this teacher might be capable of.

So, Jesus withdrew to a solitary place. He leaves those places that are causing trouble and attempts to get away, to a quieter place, to an area that is not the centre of attention. Yet the crowds follow him on foot, coming to where he is, and Jesus has compassion on them, and healed their sick.

This is the first tension presented in today's gospel reading. The tension between the crowd that Jesus has left behind, who had lack of faith so that few miracles could be done there, contrasted with this crowd, who have followed Jesus to a deserted area, where he cures their sick.

This tension offers us opportunity to continue reflecting on Jesus' teachings and the stories of his life, as instruction



for how to live in the kingdom of God and as the Church. It's helpful for a moment to pause and make sure we are on the same page for what I mean by church. When I refer to us reflecting on how we live our life as the church, I'm not talking about us specifically here at Epiphany – we are part of the church, but as we reflect on Jesus' teaching, we are reflecting on how we all are part of the church around the world, those who follow Jesus and his teachings, who participate in the sacraments, and who understand ourselves as the community of God.

So, how is the church to act? Jesus in the parables that came earlier has taught them – about how it grows, about how it affects all those around it, about how until the harvest comes it is a mix of wheat and weeds. But now, in this deserted place, the disciples are offered the opportunity to live out life as the church, as the kingdom of God. To live in an abundant way that cares for those around them.

But instead of seeing the kingdom of God present, the disciples see too great of a challenge. They see a lack of food, and they suggest that now is the time to disperse the crowd. As evening approached the disciples came to Jesus and said: "This is a remote place and it's already getting late. Send the crowd away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

The crowds have gathered. A prototype of the church is there. And the disciples want to disperse.

Jesus instead offers a different vision.

Give them something to eat.

We have nothing here, they reply: – and this is where the second tension comes in – nothing here, except five loaves of bread and two fish.

As they hold onto something, however small it might seem for the size of the crowd, as they hold onto five loaves and two fish, they see nothing.

Which is often how the church, both big picture church, and our local church, this is how we often look at our situation.

We look at the 20-30 people around us who have gathered to be a community, to follow Jesus, and we say we have nothing.

We look at our neighbourhood around us and say: no one wants to come to church.

We look at our ability to serve and help – and feel that if our bodies aren't capable of what we used to do, climbing ladders or serving dishes of food, or leading music – well then, we can do nothing.

We fall into the trap, in our lives as a church and in our lives every day – of seeing that we have nothing, when in fact, we have five loaves of bread and two fish.

Jesus says: bring them to me.

Bring the bread and fish. Bring your small gathering. Bring your one or two neighbours. Bring your willingness to help in any way.

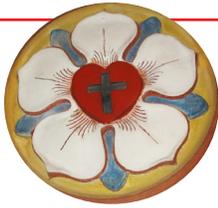
Bring it to me.

And Jesus took what little they had, looks up to heaven, blessed it, and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples. Then the disciples gave them to the crowd, and everyone ate until they were full. And they filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. Like the tiniest mustard seed growing to be the biggest shrub, the smallest amount has grown to feed the largest crowd.

When the disciples said to disperse, Jesus instead brings to life the kingdom of God. Jesus sees the church. Sees a place where people gather. Sees a place where people bring their gifts. Sees a place where they look to God and where what they have is shared until there is so much to be offered that we end up with leftovers.

This is how our church is to live: gathered in faith, where Jesus has compassion on us and heals us. Where Jesus invites us to bring forward our many gifts. And no matter how small the collection of people, or time, or money might seem: for all of this we are to thank God. And to open ourselves up to living in the kingdom of God, sharing until all are full, and even more remains. To living as a church where Jesus offers the blessing, but we, like the disciples, are the ones who go among the people to share.

When we gather around table for Holy Communion, we are reminded of Jesus feeding those in need. How Jesus drew close to those who were hungry for redemption and reconciliation. And how this food nourishes us, strengthening our faith, to live as the church, to serve where there is need. To see abundance where we used to see nothing.



German Worship Connections

During this period when we are without a German speaking pastor, Council and Interim-Pastor Jordan Smith are happy to receive feedback about how we can serve the needs of those who are used to worshipping in German.

It has been a joy to have both our German and English-speaking members worshipping together each Sunday as a combined group, but we do recognize that some of you may wish to hear an occasional sermon in your native tongue.

Pastor Katharina from St. George's in downtown Toronto will hold an occasional prayer and social gathering in Scarborough. In the fall they will meet at the Schwabenclub on September 28, November 2, and December 14. Further details and RSVP information will be shared in our announcements.

Pastor Annika from Martin Luther Church has a weekly devotion that airs on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. 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/>

"The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind."

(anonymous)

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COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

CHAIRPERSONS	(C) COUNCIL MEMBER
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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)

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Advertising Coordinator	Nalini Badley
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Envelope Secretary	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry	Geoff Crewe (C)
Spiritual Society Liaison	Ron Heino
Treasurer	Nalini Badley

TREASURER'S REPORT

JULY 2023	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS (DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$3,535.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	4,075.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	929.26		
AMMS PARSONAGE PROPERTY TAX	1,197.36		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL UTILITIES	1,108.60		
YORK CONDOMINIUM RENTAL	150.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	372.43		
ADVERTISING - LIVITA RETIREMENT	100.00		
ONE TIME EXPENSES FOR JULY:			
LAWN MOWER REPAIRS AND BLADES		784.57	
VISIONING REALTY SERVICES		2,401.25	
ZOOM RENEWAL		226.00	
DRAIN EXPRESS		565.00	
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$11,467.65	\$13,388.31	(\$1,920.66)
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$77,284.42	\$77,094.36	\$190.06
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT JULY 31, 2023			22,606.80
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT JULY 31, 2023			134,666.43
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2024			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer