

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

20 Old Kingston Road, Scarborough, Ontario M1E 3J5

416-284-5922 • www.epiphanylutheranchurch.ca

Pastor Rasma Caune • 647-382-5093 • epiphyluth@bellnet.ca

NO. 642 • MAY 2022

Submissions due 15th of the month

Layout: Sigi Sommer 416-264-9929

sigisommer@rogers.com

While at the Bishop's retreat, we looked at the Lord's prayer in a different way, expanding our understanding of each petition using the revised and expanded edition of *Praying the Catechism* by Donald W. Johnson and Susan C. Johnson.

The first petition, "Our Father, who art in heaven," acknowledges to whom we pray, but have we used it as a rote introduction? We were asked, "Who is the OUR?" Who do we include in "OUR": only our family and friends? Or, when we pray it at council meetings or in Sunday worship, are we praying for the congregation, those assembled? Within the "OUR" do we include the marginalised, the homeless, people of different sexual orientation, gender, cultural background, and race? Does the "OUR" include the desperate and despairing, the sick and the poor, the vulnerable, the disenfranchised who feel abandoned by the church? "OUR" implies inclusivity. Do we pray for those who have hurt us emotionally, physically, or spiritually? Do we struggle to include people with differing opinions or political views, or who are authoritarians trying to control others or trying to usurp the wellbeing of others for personal gain? Inclusivity is difficult. Even Jesus challenged his disciples (and us) to pray for their enemies. I challenge you to expand your understanding of the "OUR," but also the name of God.

When we pray "our Father," it implies a certain intimacy with God, a special relationship. But are there different ways to address God other than "Father"? What if we were to choose a different name for God each

week in our daily devotions? Would it make a difference in our understanding of God? Would it increase our intimacy with God? In the ELW supplement "All Creation Sings," hymn 947 offers a great variety of names for God.

Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud (ACS 947)

*Source and Sov'reign, Rock and Cloud,
Fortress, Fountain, Shelter, Light,
Judge, Defender, Mercy, Might,
Life whose life all life endowed:*

REFRAIN

*May the church at prayer recall
that no single holy name
but the truth behind them all
is the God whom we proclaim.*

*Word and Wisdom, Root and Vine,
Shepherd, Savior, Servant, Lamb,
Well and Water, Bread and Wine,
Way who leads us to I AM: REFRAIN*

*Storm and Stillness, Breath and Dove,
Thunder, Tempest, Whirlwind, Fire,
Comfort, Couns'lor, Presence, Love,
Energies that never tire: REFRAIN*

Do any of these names help you to understand God more profoundly, more intimately, more intensely? Choose a different name than "Father" and use it for a week. It might seem uncomfortable at first, but you may gain greater insight into the heart of God through a new experience of prayer.

Pastor Rasma

GOD, COMFORTER OF US ALL

So many people in this world are hurting, despairing, being isolated, and feeling helpless. Be with them, walk with them, listen to their pleas. I pray for the disenfranchised who feel as if they do not belong anywhere. I pray for the refugee fleeing the atrocities of war. I pray for the addicted trying to find solace in things that may harm their health. I pray for the person who hasn't enough food to eat, who sits outside grocery stores hoping for an outstretched hand to help. I pray for those who are struggling to understand who they are. I pray for those who shun people for their identity as male or female, straight or gay. I pray for those who are grieving, those who are discontented with their lives, who find no purpose, see no opportunity to improve their lives. But in you, ultimate Presence and Love, I trust. In you, I hope. I give you thanks for the many blessings I have received: forgiveness of my sins, support in times of uncertainty, strength in moments of weakness, faith in times of doubt. I can't even recount them all. Help me to feel your ever-presence, Light of the world. Shine on all your people so that they may know that in you there is hope and newness of life. In your holy name, we pray! Amen.



FOOD OF THE MONTH FOR MAY

Prayer

MAY CALENDAR

The link to our Zoom 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



MAY 1

— 9:00 a.m. German Holy Communion Service
(In person & Zoom)

— 10:00 a.m. English Service of the Word
(In person & Zoom)

MAY 6 — 10:00-11:30 a.m. Bible Class

MAY 8

— 10:00 a.m. Joint Holy Communion Service
(In person & Zoom)

MAY 12 — 7:15 p.m. Council Meeting

MAY 14 — 9:30 a.m. Spring Outdoor Cleanup
(Rain date May 21)

MAY 15

— 10:00 a.m. Joint Service of the Word
(In person & Zoom with possible Town Hall
meeting following)

MAY 19 — 11:00 a.m. German ministerium

MAY 20 — 10:00-11:30 a.m. Bible Class

MAY 22

— 9:00 a.m. German Service of the Word
(In person & Zoom)

— 10:00 a.m. English Holy Communion Service
(In person & Zoom)

MAY 26 — 10:30 a.m. GTA East Ministerium
at Peace Pickering

MAY 29

— 10:00 a.m. Lay Led Service of the Word (Zoom)

Gottes Segen leuchte uns
wie das Licht am Ostermorgen.

Gottes Friede begleite uns.

Gottes Liebe beflügele uns.

Gottes Freude rühre uns an.

Christus ist auferstanden.

In diesem Glauben segne uns Gott. — Hans Köhler



KUDOS to all worship leaders during the Lenten season.

Pastor Rasma

Postponement of Congregational Voters' Meeting

In order to provide the Visioning Committee the opportunity to more thoroughly explore and report on specific redevelopment options, the scheduled Congregational Voters' Meeting of May 15 is postponed. Once determined, new dates for Town Hall and Voters' Meetings will be announced at Worship Services, by email, and in The Morningstar.

Your Visioning Committee

Hybrid Worship Services: Order of Service

During a Zoom worship experience, the order of the service is shared on the screen by the pastor or worship leader for everyone to follow. When worship services are in person, the service setting is in the hymnal or there may be a printed bulletin to guide us. However, during a hybrid service, we are unable to have the order of the service on the screen for those using Zoom; only the live-stream is available. This means that prayers, or hymns, or other parts of the liturgy are "listen only." Some options for those following the service on Zoom are to open/download the order of worship from the church website and have it display on a second screen, which may be a monitor, a tablet, or even a cell phone. Another option is to print the order of service to have on hand during the Zoom service. If these are not available to you, we may be able to mail or deliver a copy of the order of the service to you for a hybrid service. To explore these last two options, please contact Denise Dennis (denise.dennis@outlook.com)/416-264-4091.

*Denise Dennis,
Epiphany Council*

*Gepriesen seist du, Gott,
der du die Lichter in der Höhe geschaffen
und der du das Licht
in den Himmeln leuchten lässt über das All.
Du schufst, um Licht zu spenden,
die Sonne für den Tag
und den Mond und die Sterne für die Nacht
und das Licht der Kerzen.
Du bist das hoch gefeierte Licht,
heiliges Urlicht,
vor dir flieht die Finsternis.
Dein lebendiges Licht, Christus,
sende in unsere Herzen
und lass uns einmütig rufen:
Gepriesen sei der heilige Name
deiner Herrlichkeit.
Wir preisen und verherrlichen dich:
den Vater und den Sohn und den Heiligen Geist
jetzt und in Ewigkeit. Amen. — Armenischer Lichtsegen*

CONTRIBUTED BY PASTOR RASMA

The Richest of Foods

ISAIAH 55: 1-9

PSALM 63: 1-8

1 CORINTHIANS 10: 1-13

LUKE 13: 1-9



What comes to mind when you read these statements?

1. I am often mistaken for fruit.
2. I spoil very quickly (1-3 days).
3. I can burn you.

Did you know these things about FIGS? Perhaps these might have helped:

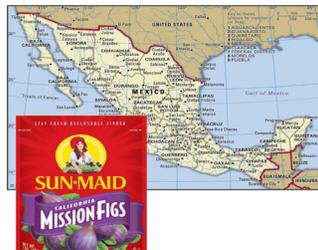
1. I am a natural sweetener, as much as honey or sugar.
2. I contribute to digestive health.
3. I am picked fresh but mostly sold dried.

FIGS



Figs have long been prized as a food source and historians consider it the oldest cultivated fruit tree (as early as 4000 BC in Egypt or Arabia). Figs have their origins in the Mediterranean but were (trans)planted to Mexico in the 1500s; and a variety now widely known as Black Mission

From the Mediterranean to Mexico and California



figs was introduced to the San Diego Mission, California in the 1700s. In addition, figs are symbolic in myths such as the story of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome; and ancient Greece awarded figs to Olympians. Figs are found

in the Koran as one of 2 sacred trees, in the Torah, and in the Bible (you may recall the fig leaves that Adam and Eve used to cover themselves after they ate from the Tree of

Finding figs...



Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. In the many verses where figs or fig trees are mentioned in the Bible, they symbolize prosperity, wellbeing, and security. For example, figs are one of the seven foods identified as being bountiful in the promised land, God's gift to Israel. Under King Solomon, the safety and prosperity of every family was identified as

Figs = health and wealth



"everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25). Since fig trees can live up to 100 years and produce 2 crops a year, their value to both health and wealth can't be understated.

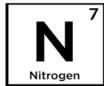
This may help explain the frustration of the landowner in the parable Jesus tells. Fig trees can start producing fruit after about 2 years, and the landowner has been patiently waiting 3 years to see some sign of a harvest to come. In addition, fig tree roots are shallow and spread quite widely, limiting what

Fig tree roots spread widely



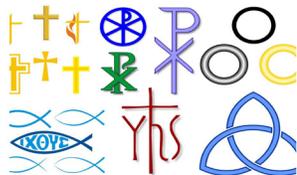
else can be grown in their vicinity, which likely contributes to the landowner's dismissive remark about the fruitless tree "wasting the soil" (v. 7). A modern gardening guide suggests 3 likely reasons why a fig tree is not producing: the age of the tree, water conditions, or the nitrogen content in the soil. So, as the parable puts it, for the fig tree, enough is enough.

Age – Water – Nitrogen



However, this *is* a parable, a simple story used to illustrate a lesson or spiritual truth, but one in which the meaning is given indirectly. So, we need to look at the symbols and read between the fig leaves, er, between the lines. The

SYMBOLS



key symbols in this parable are the landowner (God), the gardener (Jesus), and the fig tree (Israel or mankind); and let me boldly add the manure as another symbol.

MANURE



In this story, we, as fig trees, are outwardly perfect, putting out attractive green leaves, but we are not producing those

rich spiritual fruits of the spirit: joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The gardener asks for more time to remedy the situation, to have more time to coax the tree into productivity, into bearing that desirable food by adding a good application of SH***, um, manure.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

love,
joy,
peace,
patience,
kindness,
goodness,
faithfulness,
gentleness,
and self-control



Galatians 5:22-23

The parable suggests that it's the soil we fig-humans are growing in that is the problem the gardener recognizes, or specifically the nitrogen problem (hence the call for manure). Let me suggest that the soil is the world around us. In this soil the tree puts down roots, the trunk reaches skyward, and the leaves bud and blow in the breezes of our modern society. As such trees, we can remain rooted in this secular soil and perhaps even be content with being ornamental, or without fruit. We may not even notice that the soil is being

"LIVING"

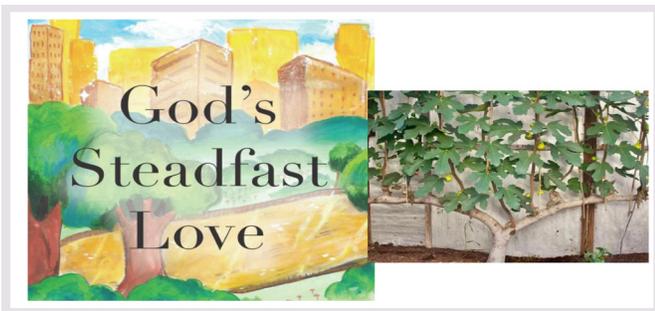


depleted by climate change, by political injustice such as we are seeing from Russia, or by a culture of mass production and a throw-away attitude. Of course, as fig-humans, we can grow in this soil; but are we flowering and fruiting?

As the gardener in the parable points out, fixing the nitrogen in the soil happens when manure is added and tilled into the earth, making the nitrogen accessible through the root system. I think this addition of manure is an important element for our consideration. As you may know, manure is decomposed, or altered matter that stinks; it's a dark and malodorous unpleasantness we may prefer to avoid. Yet agricultural science assures us that organic manure is the stuff that replenishes the soil for our weary roots. Sure, we can try synthetic fertilizers, or what I might otherwise call social distractions that we believe make us happy. Think, for example, about the many returning "attractions" as pandemic restrictions are eased and we return to live theatre, packed restaurants, concerts, parties, shopping sprees, crowded beaches and cruise ships, festivals, and

more. We might argue that we “need” these things, our “normal” life, we need our roots in this social soil to feel fulfilled and truly “living” again.

The parable Jesus tells, though, invites us to think further about the “real” root food, the manure that he is going to add to the soil for the benefit of we fig-humans to amend nitrogen-poor soil. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians gives some real-world examples of poorly conditioned soil for our roots, depleted by such things as idolatry and sexual immorality. Isaiah describes poor soil as being comprised of wicked and unrighteous thoughts and deeds (v. 7). Neither offers an exhaustive list, which suggests to me that we will each need to do some digging and testing to find what is depleting our soil. The key, though, is to remember that the manure we need is provided by Jesus Christ who alters, decomposes, or changes this worldly matter into the nitrogen-like blessings and grace freely given by God



to enrich our soil, and in turn, our fruitful souls. In other words, as the Psalmist suggests, our roots, or “my whole being clings to you [Lord]” (v. 8) to be sustained by the best nitrogen source for our roots, the “steadfast love” of God (v. 2) who promises that through this gift, “he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55: 7) and the tree will be saved.

In support of the parable’s message, Paul reminds us that we really do need to pay attention to our circumstances, our soil conditions. He says, “if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall” (v. 12) into spiritual decay. Paul also adds there is no denying that we are all in this together: “no testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone” (v. 13).



In this I hear that we can also help build each other up, we can encourage each other to stretch our roots toward that important manure provided in the love of Christ. Perhaps this manure smells like helping a refugee family or running errands

for a neighbour; maybe that manure smells like buying local, walking more, planting a little garden; or it might smell like conscientious voting in an election, or supporting the wider



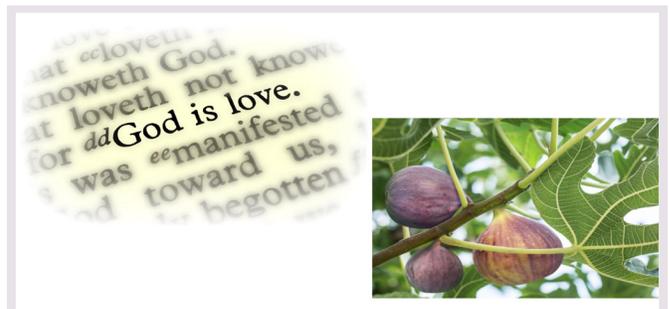
church, or attending Bible study, or praying for one another. Even with all that, we are told by Paul that we will be tested, we will have to examine the soil we stand in, but that “God is faithful...[and] he will also provide the way out” (v.13).

As I see it, that way out is that extra time the gardener asks for so that good nitrogen-blessings can be dug into the soil we are growing in. Perhaps collectively, Epiphany is a fig tree in uncertain soil; but with prayer and discernment, we will have our roots richly fed, and we will bear the richest food.



Every fig produced through Epiphany over the last fifty-plus years, and every fig yet to grow out of that soil in the time we have, will be a blessing of faith and grace.

The prophet Isaiah also reminds us of time, but in the abstract, when he tells us to “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near” (v. 6). Conversely, the gardener in the parable asks specifically for a whole year, or a whole new growing cycle in which to amend the soil with blessings, to see what might be produced. It will involve some attentive but insistent digging into our soil by our sacrificial gardener. Jesus is willing to get his hands dirty on our behalf, and he has interceded on our behalf with the frustrated landowner. All



of this is with the intention of loving the perfectly imperfect fig tree...which takes me back to the first 3 statements at the beginning. When a productive fig tree is harvested, the sap from the cut stem can burn your skin; the figs must be picked ripe to be tasty and sweet, but that means a very short shelf life of only 1-3 days; and the fig is really the inverted flower of the tree, not a fruit at all. In other words, we fig-humans are difficult by nature, fragile, and disinclined to correctly identify ourselves: a flower rather than a fruit. However, if we accept the nitrogen-blessings lavished on our roots over our growing season, at the very least, every fig-human can stand in the good earth of Christ's love and live and love richly as



fig flowers, as the richest of foods, perfectly grown in the love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Denise Dennis
*Message presented on
 Sunday March 20, 2022
 at Lay Led Zoom Service*

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Epiphany Spring Outdoor Cleanup • Saturday May 14

With winter safely behind us, it's time to prepare our beautiful grounds for the summer months. Please come out to help us rake and bag the fallen leaves and pick up the wind blown trash, all while helping to shed those extra Covid pounds. We will start at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday May 14 (rain date May 21).

Please bring your own rakes, work gloves, and leaf blower if you have one. The church will supply leaf and garbage bags.

Thank you for your support.

**Ron Heino, Chair,
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TREASURER'S REPORT

MARCH 2022	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$3,940.00	\$17,062.86	
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	702.45		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	1,223.24		
AMMS PARSONAGE PROPERTY TAX	1,490.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL UTILITIES	1,143.27		
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$12,573.96	\$17,062.86	(\$4,488.90)
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$30,955.50	\$38,250.81	(\$7,295.31)
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT MARCH 31, 2022			21,278.45
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT MARCH 31, 2022			139,299.29
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2022			30,000.00

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer