

The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Submissions 15th of the month
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Dear Companions in Faith:

At the conclusion of Charles Dickens' famous story, *A Christmas Carol*, the penitential miser Ebenezer Scrooge promises the fearsome Ghost of Christmas Yet-to-come, who holds his mortal fate in his hands: "Good Spirit, I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year ..."

Good advice for us all – and the world! The spirit of good will, the hope of peace on earth, and the mutual recognition of our common – and mortal – humanity kindled in the annual Christmas season is truly a welcome antidote for the virus of fear and hatred that infects the human heart, and the most effective vaccine against the pandemic of violence and vengeance dominant throughout the year! Composer Jerry Herman acknowledged our perennial need in his 1966 song, *"We Need A Little Christmas Now!"*

The death of my brother, Erich, on December 29th – the fifth day of Christmas – has certainly made me aware of my own personal need for the hope and promise of Christmas! And I suspect that all of you – indeed the whole world and all people – share the same daily need for a little Christmas to prepare us for, as well as sustain us in the eventual "now" of our darkest days. In fact, our church's liturgical calendar anticipates, and meets, that very need!

Of the twenty-nine "Lesser Festivals" provided for weekday worship during the year – as distinct from the fifty-two "Major Festivals" of Sunday worship, plus the Nativity of Our Lord (December 25) and the Epiphany of Our Lord (January 6) – ten of them prescribe Gospel readings connected with Christmas! So, in honour of my brother's memory, and to keep our Christmas spirit alive throughout the year, I plan to include a brief reflection on each of the afore-mentioned (a.k.a.) "moveable feasts", in each issue of *The Morningstar*, beginning this month.

Happy New Year! Merry Christmas! And, as Tiny Tim said, "God bless us, every one!"

Peace, joy, love!

Pastor Peter

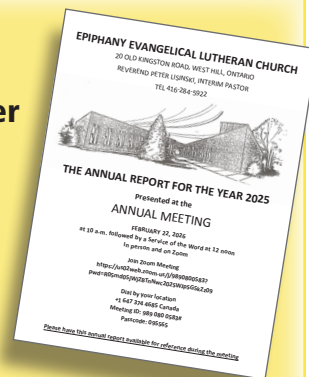


NOTICE OF 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held **Sunday February 22** at **10 a.m.** in person at the church and online with Zoom, followed by a Service of the Word at 12 noon.

Epiphany needs your help in order to proceed with this important meeting!
We need a quorum of 25 members.

Please mark the date on your calendar and make every attempt to attend.



The Annual Report for 2025 contains the meeting agenda as well as supporting materials. It will be distributed both electronically and as hard copy to those who customarily receive paper copies of *The Morningstar* well in advance of the meeting. We encourage utilizing the electronic version as the "green" option, however hard copy will be made available to anyone upon request.

Epiphany Church Council

FEBRUARY 2026 CALENDAR

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 1

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (GREEN)
12 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 6

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

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 8

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (GREEN)
12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12

7 p.m. Council Meeting

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 15

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD (WHITE)
12 noon Holy Communion Service
Pastor Peter Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 20

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

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 22

10 a.m. (In-person & Zoom) EPIPHANY'S ANNUAL MEETING

*Please have your copy of the
Annual Report for 2025 available*

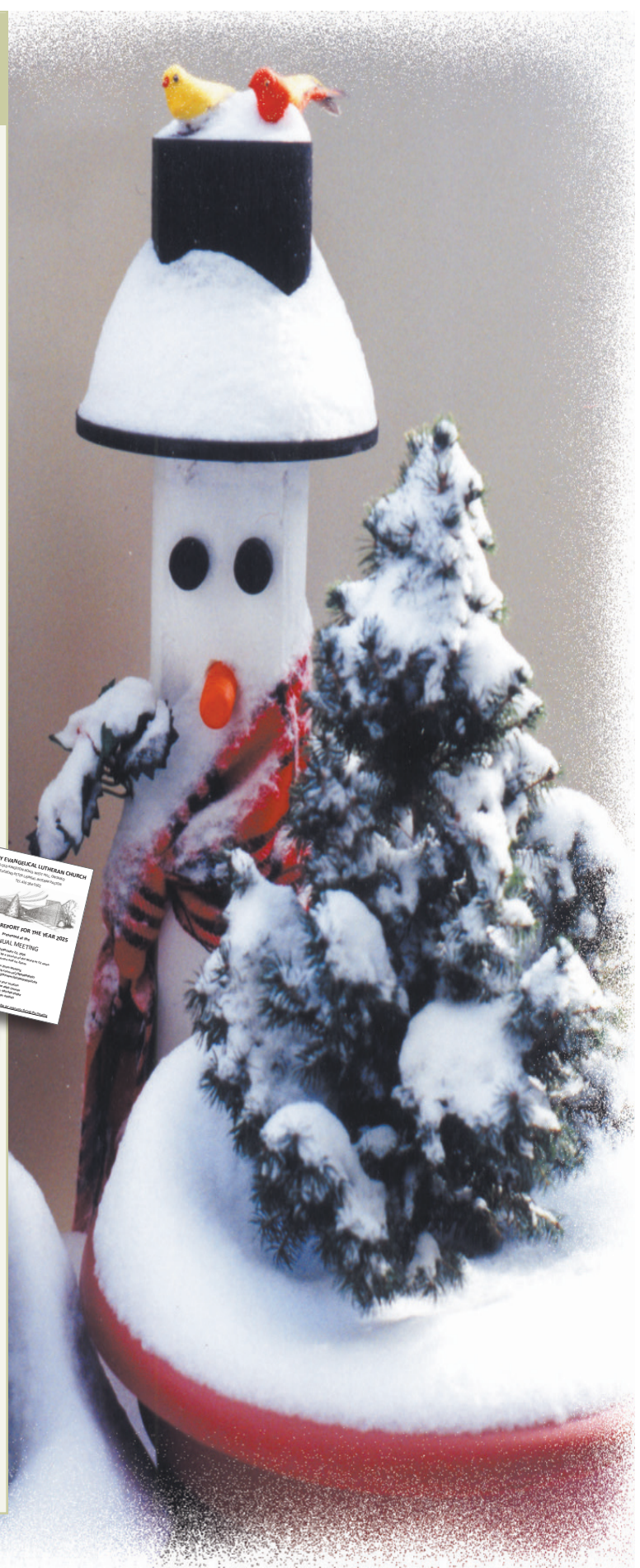
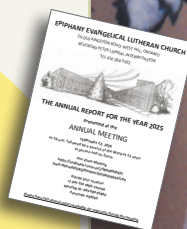
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT (PURPLE)
12 noon Service of the Word
Pastor Peter Lisinski
(In-person & Zoom)

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)

Or by phone following the prompts:

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



A LITTLE CHRISTMAS THIS MONTH

(Lectionary: Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm 84; Hebrews 2:14-18; Gospel: Luke 2:22-40)

On February 2nd, while our secular calendar celebrates Groundhog Day, hoping for deliverance from the discontent of winter in the promise of an early spring, the Christian church remembers Christmas Day, and God's deliverance from the discontent of human mortality in the divine humanity of Jesus Christ.

Forty days after his birth, Joseph and Mary, like all God's faithful and devout people in the history of Israel, presented Jesus, their firstborn child, to God in the sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple. The law of Moses required that, along with a pair of pigeons or turtledoves, an unblemished, one year old lamb be sacrificed in the traditional postpartum purification ritual, unless the family could not afford to buy a lamb from the licensed temple merchants. By mentioning only pigeons and turtledoves, Luke tells us two important things about Jesus: first, that he was born into a poor family; second, that his parents recognized in Jesus the sacrificial lamb offered to fulfill the promise the name revealed to them by the Angel Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23).

The sequence of events that would unfold God's promise of salvation began some thirty years later when the adult Jesus again presented himself in the Jerusalem temple for a fateful eviction of the licensed temple merchants who exploited the poor for financial gain! Inspired by God's Holy Spirit, "righteous and devout" Simeon prophesied the fearful truth Mother Mary already understood – the cross she already stood under: "This child is destined ... to be a sign that will be opposed ... and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Today, forty days after Christmas, in a world where the holy family of God's children continues to be impoverished, oppressed and exploited, you and I remember the vocation we share with Simeon and Anna, and all God's called and chosen people throughout the ages: to proclaim the grace and mercy of God's salvation manifest – *epiphany* – in the Bethlehem birth and Jerusalem temple presentation of the Christ Child, and to present our own lives as living sacrifices of thanksgiving – *eucharist* – to God's promise of holy communion in the whole and holy new creation established in Jesus' birth and fulfilled in his death and resurrection.

Pastor Peter Lisinski



“ETERNAL EMMANUEL”

trust that the annual celebration of Jesus' birth has given you pause for reflection in light of whatever joy or sorrow, hope or burden, memory or fear is shaping your life as the Christmas season dissolves into this new calendar year of AD 2026. For Rosarii and me and our family, the fifth day of Christmas brought the news that my younger brother, Erich, died ten days after being admitted to hospital. When we shared the news with our grandchildren, nine-year old Chelsea said, "That's sad, but it's going to happen to us all eventually." ... I suppose someday she and her seven-year old brother, Evan, may even begin to question their belief in Santa Claus!

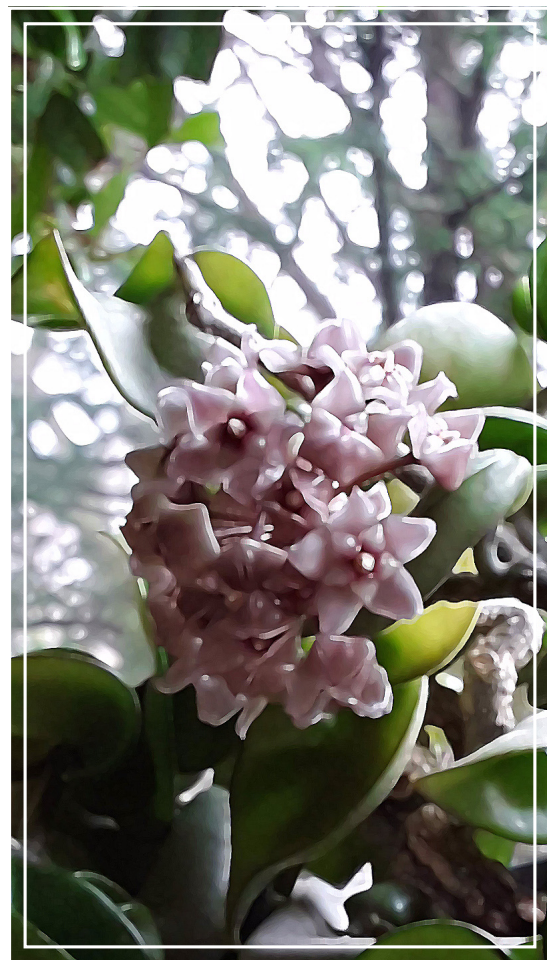
Yes, growing up costs us our childhood innocence. And the inevitable mistakes and failures, disappointments, regrets and conflicts we endure over the passing years darken our understanding of life's meaning and purpose; and the longer we live, the more often our journey is over-shadowed by life's inevitable tragedies – as others within our congregation and around our community – like Erich's son, Simon – enduring the grief of the "First Christmas" after a cherished companion's death are painfully aware. But we pray, and trust, that over time, faith will be renewed, and grief healed – though never fully cured – by the grace and mercy of God. Slowly but surely, the ordinary round of daily routine – seemingly senseless in the wake of loss – begins to remind us how precious God's gift of life is, and renews the hope that our lives – personally and communally – will come to their ultimate manifestation – *epiphany* – in our common human destiny.

Like wise men from the east who followed the light of a magnificent star, or like Bethlehem shepherds sent to the manger by a heavenly choir of angels, little Baby Jesus incarnates the very mystery of which Christmas is the source and the goal: Emmanuel, God with us – *God with us; God with us; God with us*, eternally – here and now, and in each and every moment of our earthly mortal lives! Jesus was born just as we are born – gasping for breath from his mother's womb, tenderly nursed at her breast, dependant on the love and protection of a caring father, his fragile body warmed in the swaddling clothes common to all newborn babies in every family and culture. Jesus knew the blessings of family, friends and faith community; he also knew the frustration of personal relationships. He felt the pain of loss and grief of death. He learned the value of honest work and found satisfaction in it. He had hopes and dreams; he had doubts and disappointments. He knew the hospitality of belonging; he knew the loneliness of rejection.

Yet in all he experienced in life, Jesus remained steadfast in the faith that God's grace and mercy would ultimately triumph over all the forces of sin, evil and death that defy God, that deform the human soul and destroy human community; and he dedicated his life to resisting those cosmic powers beyond all human strength to overcome, making the ultimate sacrifice of unwavering devotion to God's word of truth and will for humanity's reconciliation. Christmas proclaims the birth of the Christ Child as God's promise to gather all people into the eternal life of love and peace for which God conceived us before the dawn of creation. Not only God with us – Emmanuel; but also the *reverse: El-u-man-em – us with God!*

Someday, God's eternal dream will come true, and all mere mortals, including us, shall see God in the divine humanity of Jesus Christ, and become fully human just as he became, and remains, fully human! In the meantime, the awe and wonder of Christmas shapes our mortal pilgrimage in light of the final words of faith and hope expressed by our late son, Mark, and carved into his gravestone: "We'll all be together again. See you in heaven."

Pastor Peter Lisinski



UPDATE FROM THE VISIONING COMMITTEE

In March 2023, the congregation agreed to work with our neighbour, The Estonian Relief Committee (ERC) to explore the redevelopment of the church property.

This decision 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 requirements, 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 sources from government agencies, banks or other financial resources. It is this latter step that has taken time as government policies and economic conditions have changed.

While the entire process has taken considerably longer than any of us thought, we are getting closer to being able to finalize a financial deal with the Estonian group.

Recently, we received an offer, from ERC, to purchase our property, which is the first step in moving forward.

We are currently in negotiations with the ERC and hopefully, will soon be able to present an acceptable deal to the congregation, for approval. I would estimate that this could happen by the end of February, early March.

As negotiations occur, we will also start work to arrive at a definitive plan for our space needs involving the design and layout of our space within the development. This will involve working with the ERC architect and development team.

In general terms, we will require our own, private area, with a separate entrance, worship and congregational use spaces, and parking. There will also, in all likelihood, be shared areas with ERC, such as larger meeting rooms and full kitchen facilities.

The ERC continues to favour a building constructed of laminated timber which is seen to be a more sustainable and environmentally friendly building method and is a quicker building technology. The entire process from receiving provincial and municipal governmental approvals, through development and construction is anticipated to take at least 2 years.

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. I would also note that patients or tenants are not restricted to any one ethnic or social group, but more controlled by physical need or age and as dictated by government guidelines.

Please note that before any final decision is made, there will be a congregational meeting called to approve the financial deal as well as a preliminary development plan. The total deal would then go to Synod for approval.

It has been a long process, but I hope everyone agrees that, in the end, the wait will be worth it, and we will have a new facility that will generate new energy for the mission of Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church moving forward.

God willing!!

Gordon Vollmer

TREASURER'S REPORT

DECEMBER 2025	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$15,955.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	1,055.72		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL UTILITIES	1,018.50		
AMMS PROPERTY TAX	1,250.83		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	958.39		
INTEREST AND DIVIDEND INCOME	5,446.47		
CHANGE IN INVESTMENT INCOME	51,430.91		
CURRENT MONTH TOTALS	\$81,190.82	\$20,473.95	\$60,716.87
YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	\$185,239.60	\$115,413.70	\$69,825.90
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT DECEMBER 31, 2025			31,520.43
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT THE END OF DECEMBER			221,010.11
SCOTIA BANK NON REDEEMABLE GIC AT 3.04% MATURING OCTOBER 26, 2026			30,000.00
CIBC NON REDEEMABLE GIC AT 2.80% MATURING OCTOBER 19, 2026			30,000.00
CIBC FLEXIBLE GIC AT 2.154% MATURING OCTOBER 19, 2026			20,000.00
SIGNIFICANT EXPENSES DURING DECEMBER 2025:			
	PARSONAGE INSURANCE		2,363.04
	REMOVAL OF FALLEN TREE		8,158.60
	CHRISTMAS GIFTS		1,250.00
Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer			

S T E W A R D S H I P

It's hard to miss that mid-February observance of Valentine's Day, a day set aside for showing and sharing tokens of "love" between family and friends. Perhaps as no surprise, pet owners may also mark the day with their furry loved ones.



Although not as companionable or cuddly as a dog or cat, some might be inclined to share a Valentine with trees, or bees, or even birds!

Valentine's Day is an especially good reminder to share with our family and friends how they have blessed us. It may seem more challenging to show our love to the natural world that we inhabit.



Stewardship of our earthly home is a responsibility we all share. How we choose to preserve and protect it is primarily through raised awareness followed by action. For example, places like the Toronto Wildlife Centre (www.torontowildlifecentre.com) offer educational programs, along with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation of local species. Or, one can learn more about backyard biodiversity by connecting with LEAF (www.yourleaf.org) for information and support in planting native trees and shrubs.



Further from Epiphany, "Friends of Creation" (through CLWR (Canadian Lutheran World Relief)) seeks support for restoring the ecosystem and the economy at Lake Chad in Africa, made possible through both education and action.

Our interconnectedness with our environment, and our neighbours, is undeniable. Scripture puts it this way: "the soul of every living thing is in the hand of God, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10).



I hope all your Valentine's Day expressions of "love" are meaningful and inclusive.

Happy Valentine's Day!
You are a blessing.

Denise Dennis

CHURCH COUNCIL

Council Chair:	Geoff Crewe
Council Vice-Chair:	Denise Dennis
Council Secretary:	Frank Dietz
Councillor-at-Large:	Greg Furan
Councillor-at-Large:	Gord Munro
Councillor:	Frank Dietz
Councillor:	Sigrid Engler
Treasurer:	Nalini Badley

COMMITTEE LIAISONS

Education:	Open
Finance:	Geoff Crewe
Property:	Geoff Crewe
Stewardship:	Denise Dennis
Visioning:	Gordon Vollmer
AMMS Liaison:	Geoff Crewe
Worship & Music:	Marg Crewe
Morningstar:	Sigi Sommer
Seniors Group:	Ute Wentzel
Advertising Coordinator:	Nalini Badley
ELW:	Sigrid Engler
Envelope Secretary:	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry:	Open
Spiritual Society Liaison:	Open