



The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

20 Old Kingston Road, Scarborough, Ontario M1E 3J5

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

NO. 645 • SEPTEMBER 2022

Submissions due 15th of the month

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On August 14th, Dorothea, Sigi, and I attended a symposium on ***The Role of Faith in Establishing Societal Peace***; it was held at the Baitul 'Afiyat Mosque and I also spoke on the topic. There were representatives of the Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities of faith. It was a very informative afternoon. I want to share part of my presentation from that day.

IMAGINE

the image of bees flying from one flower to the next. They begin in the garden of a Roman Catholic cathedral, then fly toward a Sikh temple, then to an Islamic Mosque, then toward a Protestant Church, on to a Hindu Temple, and then to a Jewish Synagogue. They do not discriminate, do not think that one is better than the next, but rather find worth in each place as if working together to create what God considered good. This may sound idyllic, but is that not what we are doing today? We gather together as many faiths to speak about our common desire for peace in a world that is fraught with violence: in our homes, on our streets, through unrest and wars and schisms; a world fraught with uncertainty about our food sources, a lack of shelter, poverty, higher prices and inflation.

Bees for Peace is an organization with origins in Germany that came about through observing bees.

"We live in extraordinarily challenging times — the kinds of times that have been the crucibles from which emerge new faiths. Why? Because, in the face of enormous struggles, faith gives us hope. It turns us

away from passing pleasures to focus on profound truths. Faith traditions offer teachings and techniques that strengthen our resolve and build up our resilience. They remind us that life on this beautiful planet is a bountiful gift — one that delights and astounds us, filling us with a profound sense of gratitude and generosity. They nudge us past our clinging to our egos and towards forgiveness, peace and reconciliation — not just with others, but with ourselves.

Today, people of faith are reconsidering their traditions and finding in them fonts of creativity and inspiration for a value-led life, one in tune with the planet that has birthed and nourished us all" (<https://www.beesforpeace.org>).

"People of faith are joining ranks with environmentalists and ecologists to contribute to preserving our [bee] pollinators. They do so for the same reasons, but sometimes with additional motivations: to help preserve the natural foundations of peoples whose food security is being threatened; to cooperate with poor people in finding new, sustainable sources of income; to strengthen their own communities with holistic occupations; to promote peace between disparate groups of people, thereby also fostering a healthier environment, social and ecological" (<https://www.beesforpeace.org>).

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus challenged his listeners, saying that following him would be a difficult journey, where there would be differing opinions on his ministry and where there may be schisms in one's own family:

LUKE 12:49-56

[Jesus said:] ⁴⁹"I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

⁵¹Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! ⁵²From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided:

father against son

and son against father,
mother against daughter

and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her
daughter-in-law

and daughter-in-law against
mother-in-law."

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and has been preaching, teaching, healing, and welcoming the common person to dine with him, among them sinners, the disenfranchised, the outcast, the sick. He has been offering a different kind of existence, challenging his listeners to think outside the box, not centering on one's own needs, but rather on the needs of others. He has told the crowds the parable of the good Samaritan helping a complete stranger at the side of the road and providing that stranger with care and shelter.

He has challenged the rich to give up their wealth and give it to the poor. He has stated that all of this is challenging and requires sacrifice. He has warned them about greed and worry, and being prepared for what to expect in



FOOD OF THE MONTH FOR SEPTEMBER

Listen. Share.
Understand.

the future as they continue to follow him, or falling away because it is too hard. Opposition to his teachings has begun to escalate. He is being challenged by both the secular and religious leaders of his day.

When asked, "Teacher which commandment in the law is the greatest commandment?" Jesus responds by saying: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second commandment is like this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This challenges us to rethink our narrowmindedness and expand our vision as to who is our neighbor and what issues we face

in this day and age that divide as well as unify us. A commentator asks the question, "What issues in your community require the response and public action of people of faith? What issues divide and unite? Are there issues around gender, health care, gun violence, economic justice and fair wages or public education? Are there ecological or environmental issues, racism and white privilege that need to be challenged?"

The only way to challenge such issues is to talk to one another, to expand our understanding of who is our neighbour. It is only by listening that we learn. It is by daring to hear differing opinions on issues that we become tolerant. It is by such symposiums as this one that we welcome our new neighbours into our circle of friends, excited at the potential that we as communities of faith can achieve for the betterment of the society in which we live and work.

As a Christian pastor, I can share that Jesus invites us to be transformed, to become aware of the needs of the people around us. Look around and see the poverty, see the racism, see the lack of understanding that causes the violence and the fear that some have because they are afraid of asking, "who are you; what do you think; how can I trust you?" It is only when we let our guard down and open ourselves, our hearts and minds, that we can think about establishing peace in our society. We need to break down the walls of ignorance and offer education on the various issues that face us all in everyday life.

The early church struggled to understand how to proceed after Jesus' death; people lived in fear until Jesus reappeared to them after the resurrection and greeted them with "Peace be with you." He assured them that they would come to understand his teachings and expectations of what was to come: building the kingdom of God on earth where everyone has a place, where everyone has worth, where everyone has a voice. On the day of Pentecost when flames came from heaven and landed on people assembled from different places, people began to understand each other regardless of their language, their origins, or their traditions and peace became a possibility, a new reality.

We are all broken, but our faith is what makes us whole. It is in working together that we live in hope of a new world order where peace is possible, where understanding and tolerance exist. In a peaceable kingdom there is forgiveness, patience, and acts of compassion and love for all humankind and creation. When we have peace in our hearts and peace in our relationships we begin to listen more closely, to understand each other better, to be tolerant of each other, and not feel estranged or fearful.

As Jesus says as he bids his disciples farewell, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

Listen and understand. Be reconciled to one another. Be of good courage. Love one another. Then we will experience that peace, that shalom, that salaam.

Pastor Rasma

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

The link to our Zoom meetings:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?](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



SEPTEMBER 2

— 10:15-11:30 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

SEPTEMBER 4

— 9:00 a.m. German Holy Communion Service
(In person & Zoom)
— 10:00 a.m. English Holy Communion Service
(In person & Zoom)

SEPTEMBER 7 — 7:15 p.m. Council Meeting

SEPTEMBER 11-17 — Pastor on vacation

SEPTEMBER 11

— Guest Preacher TBA (In person & Zoom)

SEPTEMBER 16

— 10:00-11:30 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

SEPTEMBER 18

— 10:00 a.m. Joint Service of the Word
(In person & Zoom)
Followed by Town Hall Meeting

SEPTEMBER 22 — GTA East Ministerium at Epiphany

SEPTEMBER 25

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

SEPTEMBER 29 — Pastor at Moll Berczy Haus for 10:00 a.m. Worship Service

SEPTEMBER 30

— 10:00-11:30 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

- KUDOS**
- ◆ Thanks to our summer gardeners Dorothea, Nalini, Peter von Gemmingen, and Peter Herrmann.
 - ◆ Thanks to all who helped with our Yard Sale back in June.
 - ◆ Thanks to Ute for helping me set up for our Toronto German speaking congregations' indoor worship and picnic.
 - ◆ Thanks to those who helped make Bob Haebe's celebration of life special and meaningful for family and friends.

Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel
kehre ich ein, denn du behütest mich.

Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel
weine ich mich aus, und mein Herz wird leicht.

Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel
halte ich dem Sturm stand und finde neues Glück.

Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel
fühle ich mich geborgen, denn du bist bei mir.

Du führst meine Sache zu einem guten Ende.
Deine Güte reicht, so weit der Himmel ist,
und deine Wahrheit, so weit die Wolken gehen.

— AUS CHRISTLICHER LYRIK
Pastor Rasma



Visioning Committee Update

It has been a while since our last report to the congregation. The Visioning Committee has, however, continued to meet on a regular basis, since the last congregational meeting, when the congregation supported and approved the redevelopment scenario of the church property.

As a brief update, we are now working with a new Synod advisor, Rev. Jennifer Hoover who has replaced Rev. Dr. Mark Harris, who has retired. I would like to thank Mark for his guidance and input into our process and welcome Jennifer. We look forward to working with her towards a successful conclusion to this part of our visioning journey.

After a number of meetings, we are now ready to propose a development partner, subject to congregational approval, that we believe can lead us to the successful redevelopment of our property with a plan that meets our congregational goals, as outlined in our Visioning and Core Value statements.

We are therefore asking the congregation to meet and be presented with a proposed plan to move forward with the redevelopment of the property.

This meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2022, after the Sunday service, and will be in person or available as a Zoom meeting.

An information package will be sent out before the meeting. Please review and be ready to ask questions and to discuss the plan.

Please attend this important event.

Gordon Vollmer

The Road Ahead

What's next for Epiphany? That's the obvious question to ask after hearing the announcement about Pastor Rasma's retirement, coming up in October. It is natural to feel a sense of loss and uncertainty about the future when a Pastor leaves. The backdrop of our Visioning redevelopment process only adds to our anxiety level.

Fortunately, we have the full support and resources of the Eastern Synod of the ELCIC at our disposal. In these circumstances, there is a well-defined process that we follow, steered by Epiphany Church Council.

High up on the list is giving Pastor Rasma a proper send-off, with thanksgiving for her time among us and well wishes for her well-earned retirement. At time of writing, this will all happen at her final Service with us on the afternoon of Sunday October 23, with Bishop Pryce and other clergy in attendance. The plan is for a hybrid live/Zoom Service. Circle the date!

Interim ministry for Epiphany will be arranged. This involves working with Synod to find an interim Pastor. Interim ministry normally includes a ministry of Word and Sacrament on Sundays and festivals, ensuring basic and emergency pastoral care needs are provided as well as coverage for baptisms, weddings and funerals, plus attending Council meetings. Interim pastors often are serving other churches in a full-time capacity, so it is probable that we will need to be flexible, for example in terms of service times and German fluency. Interim Pastor is an appointed part-time position, negotiated and approved by a vote of Council. A congregational voters' meeting is not required.

A Call Committee is formed, supported and guided by Synod, whose sole purpose is to recommend a candidate for full time Pastor to Council. Once again there is a well-defined reflection, selection and interview process for the committee to follow. We will be soliciting capable volunteers for this key committee in due course. Once endorsed by Council, a congregational voters' meeting is held before a call is extended.

What can *you* do now? We need your support and prayers during this process. Take time to seriously consider volunteering to assist in any of these, or other tasks. We have a very limited pool of extraordinary volunteers and but need more fresh talent and ideas. Now is the time to put up your hand.

Most importantly, trust in God to guide us through all of these challenges. We are not alone, and I am confident that working together, we will emerge as a reinvigorated congregation according to His will.

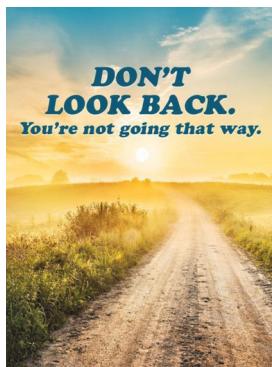
Ron Heino
Chair, Epiphany Church Council



Don't Look Back

[KINGS 19:15,16, 19-21 • PSALM 16 • GALATIANS 5:1, 13-25 • LUKE 9: 51-62]

Recently, I had a challenging conversation with a colleague about re-evaluating their approach to completing projects. As realization set in, so did their sense of regret. As we strategized



about possible solutions, their conversation would slip between rationalization and regret, jeopardizing the way forward. To encourage and keep things on track, I shared a quote I think suited the situation: *Don't look back, you aren't going that way.*

This came to mind again when I found the same sentiment, if not the actual words, in the readings for today [June 26, 2022]. As we will see, this phrase, *don't look back, you aren't going that way*, is also, let me say, implanted with the opposing emotions of joy and

JOY



regret. In the gospel message from Luke, Jesus addresses someone who aspires to be his follower. We hear Jesus say, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (v. 62). This sounds so harsh! I find myself being sympathetic toward this person who wants to bid his family farewell before he joins Jesus and his followers to go, in all likelihood, to places unknown. Is it so bad to want to turn back to one's family to let them know of your new plan, to get in last hugs and kisses before you head off? Of course, we can imagine

a scenario where the family decides to throw a farewell party but insists on time to invite relatives from out of town, to prepare special foods, and bring out their best party clothes. This may mean then, due to the delay in planning and arrivals (sounds like Pearson airport, right?) that this would-be follower may not catch up with Jesus and the others; or he may feel regret about leaving his caring family and does not go after all. There's no evidence for this in the text, but I can certainly imagine the possibility that things could play out this way.

W

hat I think is being said, though, is more about "focus." Jesus seems to be asking this would-be follower, "Where is your focus?" Here's where it might be helpful to delve into the farming reference about plowing. Whether your plow is being pulled by a tractor, a horse, or oxen (as it is in the reading from 1 Kings), the person guiding the plow needs their focus to be on a distant



point forward. This helps you create neat, straight rows that maximize your planting zone. If you look around or even look back, your plow will veer from one side

Uneven rows...



to another, creating curved and uneven rows. With your focus forward, your hand on the plow will be steady and your rows will be straight. So, it seems this potential follower is not ready to focus forward, but instead wants to look back to his past, and perhaps risk unsteady or wavering attention to his faith life. Perhaps then, it is not unreasonable to suggest that what Jesus is saying to all of us is, "Don't look back, you're not going that way." In fact, if we look at the reading from Galatians, it seems to suggest there are dangers in losing focus or looking back to worldly desires. The examples of what you might observe "back there" is a lengthy, but not exhaustive list:

Galatians 5:19

...fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.



If we do look back and engage in troubling, or dare I say "worldly" or just human behaviour, our hearts and minds can become troubled by regret. That's because it does happen: our focus is not forward and our lives are suddenly challenged by curving or imprudent lines made

Choices...



by the focus of our choices, our decisions, and actions when we "looked back." How many times have we seen or heard news of a driver who has killed others because of a choice to drink and drive. Or are we looking back when our habits of consumption, whether cars, or clothes, or groceries are based on convenience or even popularity, rather than conscientiousness about climate change and

its impacts? Are we looking back when we minimize or even ignore criminal incitement at the highest level of government? You surely know I am laser-focussed on Donald Trump and his careless followers, but also Canadian politicians whose focus is not on the straight plow-row of integrity.



Yet we must also consider the somewhat parallel situation to the reading from Luke that is found in 1 Kings. Here, the Lord's prophet, Elijah, is told to go back the way he came, but it is with a specific purpose that God sends him in this direction. Elijah is to anoint a new king of Israel, and then find the prophet who will take over for Elijah.

This is where we meet Elisha who is plowing! Elijah gives Elisha a sort of signal with his cloak, and Elisha recognizes the call to follow Elijah's

Elijah meets up with Elisha...



and God's call. Interestingly, when Elisha says he wants to say goodbye to his family and friends, we are not given the sense of him looking back or being unfocussed as it seemed in Luke's gospel message. Instead, it appears that Elisha may be following the 5th commandment, honouring his parents with his loving kiss goodbye. Then, Elisha takes the time for a send-off! He prepares all his oxen to share at what must have been a really big and joyful event, and it isn't until the party guests have enjoyed the feast that Elisha "set out and followed Elijah" (v. 21).

The sense here, to my reading, is of a festive send-off, perhaps like a pre-university party, a wedding rehearsal dinner, or even a retirement party: after a quick look back, your anticipation redirects your focus



to that space ahead of you. Thinking of Elisha, if he is plowing behind 12 yoke of oxen (suggesting a degree of wealth), to ensure his plow will make straight rows, his line of sight needs to be well in front of those animals, guided by a steady and practiced hand. By sacrificing the oxen and becoming focussed on being a servant of Elijah, we comprehend this as a shift in focus, in purpose, rather than an undesirable sense of “looking back” and experiencing regret.

The Psalm, from my perspective, takes us through both the “what ifs” of “looking back” and the alternative, or leaning into the joy. The writer tells us where he is focussed: “I have set the Lord always before me” (v. 8), which is that point of focus ahead of our personal plow so we can achieve straight spiritual rows. In this Psalm we find examples, like those from Galatians, that suggest the problems with “looking back” and being unfocussed. We learn that those who are faithless or who “run after other gods” (perhaps gods such as work, wealth, or materialism) result in the crooked row of “troubles multiplied” (v. 3).

Psalm 16:3

**...those who run after other gods
shall have their troubles multiplied.**

Instead, by remaining focussed ahead, we can see the straight “path of life” (v. 11), which as the psalmist describes it, results in a “fullness of joy” because “in [God’s] right hand are pleasures forevermore” (v. 11). Is it that easy?

Psalm 16:11

**You will show me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness
of joy, and in your right hand are
pleasures forevermore.**

My own propensity is to worry over the gospel text and its harshest interpretation: not being “fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62). I confess that regularly, day by day, hour by hour, depending on circumstances and mood, I can lose focus, lose sight of the God who created me and trespass beyond the boundaries of the “pleasant land” which is my “rich inheritance” from our loving God (Psalm 16:6).

Psalm 16:6

**My boundaries enclose a
pleasant land; indeed, I have a
rich inheritance.**

However, here is where I think regret just might meet joy: in the confluence of these four readings. Consider that this pleasant land is inhabited by saints who, like Elisha, plow their life-field “guided by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). They do



not, or at least do not intend to look back, or live with regret. Instead, as the Psalm points out, these saints, who are us, can live with a “fullness of joy” (v. 11). This, for me, is the example of Elisha; he is celebrating his new focus as a servant of Elijah. He no longer has that long look over all those oxen, because his focus is shorter now, closer to Elijah, to God, and his own heart. And although servanthood can have negative connotations, we see here how it can be understood as being a helper and a companion, where both are joined through that one point of focus. So, we see joy in Elisha’s preparations to join Elijah as his servant; this anticipated joy is expanded in the New Testament verses in Galatians where each of us is invited to “become slaves to one another” (Gal. 5:13) through LOVE.



Still, there is the gospel admonition to stay focussed on Christ, so we are “fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9: 62). If anyone were to examine my plowed life-rows, they are crooked, and messy, and uneven. Is there joy there? The hope of joy for me is in the “fruit of the Spirit.” In other words, despite my messy rows, my loss of focus, out of



that messy planting there is still the potential for a harvest of those fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Yet how does this happen?

I want to be able to say I won’t look back, but life is full of ups and downs, twists and turns, and my plowed rows are not straight. Yet in this heart-land that I plow, this life that I live, there are those who are the “godly... in the land” (Psalm 16:2). These are the folks that the psalmist says are “noble among the people” (v. 2). I count each of you as one of those noble spirits that are within the “boundaries that enclose [my] pleasant land” (v. 6). I could easily, as I digest and process how the pandemic and relentless aging diminish me in my own eyes, allow my sense of regret to make me lose focus, and look back to what I might believe were

better times. But in all honesty, I am more encouraged by my hope that we are invited to be "slaves to one another" in a spirit of love, or that, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). I am bold to live in hope, in JOY, that we have the potential to be more like Elijah and Elisha, companions, and helpers to one another when one or the other needs support, focus. So, I'm bold to say here, "don't look back, we're not going that way." Be joyful, fellow companions and helpers, in the sure knowledge of God's saving love; and be lovingly reminded to focus on joy, and don't look back, you're not going that way!



TREASURER'S REPORT

JUNE 2022	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$4,730.00	\$11,210.68	
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL RENT	1,500.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	72.46		
YCC RENTAL	150.00		
Garage Sale	930.00		
Funeral Donation	100.00		
Current Month Totals	\$10,057.46	\$11,210.68	(\$1,153.22)
Year to Date Totals	\$65,685.63	\$72,185.15	(\$6,499.52)
AMMS JUNE PARS AND FH UTILITIES RECV IN JULY		2,553.74	
Revised Year to Date Totals		(3,945.78)	
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2022		21,812.29	
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2022		131,005.62	
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2023		30,000.00	

JULY 2022	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS(DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$3,525.00	\$11,422.02	
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	1,176.73		
AMMS FELLOWSHIP HALL UTILITIES	791.01		
AMMS PARSONAGE PROPERTY TAX	2,536.22		
AMMS FH RENTAL	50.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	68.73		
Garage Sale	(100.00)		
Current Month Totals	\$10,622.69	\$11,422.02	(\$799.33)
Year to Date Totals	\$76,308.32	\$83,607.17	(\$7,298.85)
AMMS JUNE PARS AND FH UTILITIES RECV IN JULY		(2,553.74)	
Revised Year to Date Totals		(9,852.59)	
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT JULY 31, 2022		21,856.94	
CIBC INVESTOR'S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT JULY 31, 2022		129,591.31	
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2023		30,000.00	

Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

CHAIRPERSONS	(C) COUNCIL MEMBER
Council Chair	Ron Heino (C)
Council Vice-Chair	Denise Dennis (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Greg Furan (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Gord Munro (C)
Education Committee	Pastor Caune
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	Ron Heino (C) (Pastor Caune, Fred Kilian)
Council Secretary	Pat Bramley (C)
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	Pastor Caune



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