

THE STAR

EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELMHURST, IL

ROOTED IN CHRIST • GROWING IN FAITH • REACHING TO INVITE AND SERVE



**December
2023**

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP



9:30 A.M.

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

4:00 P.M.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY WORSHIP WITH CANDLELIGHTING
(A 30-40 MINUTE SERVICE DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR LITTLE ONES!)

8:00 P.M.

CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION

HOLIDAY SEASON WORSHIP TIMES

Please note a service will not be held on Saturday, December 23.

Regular worship times (Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 9:30 a.m.)
will resume on December 30 and 31.

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR RON

Here are a few random thoughts as we wrap up 2023 and look toward 2024.

END OF YEAR FINANCES

We suspected that this year was going to be a challenging year for us financially, and it has been. We've run a deficit most of the year, but we're closing the gap. Thank you to all who have given proportionately and sacrificially so that we can do together what God has called us to do. I believe that we will be in good shape by the end of the year. It's not too late to catch up if you are behind in your estimate. It's also a good time to consider an extra mile gift to help close the gap.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

I am encouraged by the response to our stewardship appeal, **A BLESSED PAST, A HOPEFUL FUTURE**. You'll notice in the *Stewardship Report* that we had nearly 100 responses, with about half of those increasing their giving in the coming year. We have tried to emphasize this year the importance of knowing what gifts to expect from our members throughout the year. If you haven't turned in an **Estimate of Giving** form, please do so as soon as possible. Remember that this is an *estimate* and not a *pledge*. Knowing what you intend to give simply provides valuable information as we plan our budget for 2024.

PASTOR ANNA'S FAMILY LEAVE

We have received reports from Pastor Anna and Jim that baby Luke continues to grow and gets cuter and cuddlier every day! I've had folks ask me if I know what Pastor Anna's plans are for after her leave. I don't. Your leadership team is committed to giving Pastor Anna her whole period of leave before asking for a commitment for the future. We will likely not know Pastor Anna's plans until her family leave comes to an end on December 31, 2023. We are committed to allowing her to give 100% to being a mom and wife during this time.



OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH

As I write this, I am painfully aware that many of our families are going through difficult trials—mental health and addiction issues, devastating illnesses, exhausting care of aging parents, challenges with growing children, and more. Privacy concerns keep us from sharing too much, but know that those with whom you share a pew in worship may be going through a challenging time. Even when we don't know the details, our time together as Christ's caring community is important. Simply reaching out to others with a warm smile or gracious greeting makes a huge difference in some people's days.

While there are challenges in our congregation, our community, our nation, and our world, I look to the new year with a great deal of hope that God will give us what we need!

I'll see you in church this weekend!

Pastor Ron

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

A BLESSED PAST, A HOPEFUL FUTURE

Thank you to all who responded positively to our stewardship emphasis by turning in an **Estimate of Giving (EoG)** form and **Time and Talent Survey**. While we still have a way to go to meet our goal, here are the results so far.

50	Member households INCREASED their giving
24	Member households left their giving at the SAME level
3	Member households REDUCED their giving
13	Member households submitted an EoG this year but not last year
<u>7</u>	<u>New member households submitted an EoG</u>

97 TOTAL ESTIMATE OF GIVING FORMS RECEIVED

\$ 458,203 Total amount estimated

Also, 4 member households indicated that a gift to Epiphany is part of their estate plan.

It's not too late to turn in your **Estimate of Giving** form if you haven't already done so. Knowing our members' plan for giving is critical to our creating a realistic budget. Please help us plan well by estimating your gifts. Thank you!



IMPORTANT DATES AND INFORMATION

Please note:

- Christmas Eve worship services will be held at 4:00 and 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 24.
- A service of Lessons and Carols will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 24.
- There is no worship service on Saturday, December 23.
- Sunday School will NOT meet December 24 or December 31. Classes resume January 7, 2024.
- The Church Office will be closed on Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1.
- Annual reports are due Monday, January 8, 2024.
- Annual Congregational Meeting is Sunday, January 28, 2024.

COME JOIN THE CHRISTMAS EVE CHOIR

Epiphany is looking for choir members for the 8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service! There will be one short rehearsal on Sunday, December 17, shortly after worship. Singers of all ability levels are welcome! We are really hoping to have a full choir for Christmas Eve, so please consider signing up if you are interested. Sheet music will be provided via email, and paper copies will be available at church starting Monday, December 11.

Please contact Clay if you are interested.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Jesus is the reason for the season. That is something we hold dear in our family. The lights, the tree, the gifts are all bonuses. We cherish time with family and a break from school. I hope you can all enjoy the season as much as we do!

This month in Sunday School we will be talking about the birth of Jesus. Even though this is our “usual” December lessons, we look at them a little bit different each time.

Grab your sandals, sunblock, and swim gear because it’s time for a Christmas Vacation! We’ll be making sand angels and roasting chestnuts around an open bonfire on our tropical getaway. You’ve never experienced Christmas like this! In this five-week series, we’ll focus on the birth of Jesus and the way God had been planning things from the very beginning. We’ll see how God sent Jesus for a reason, learn to trust God’s timing, understand why God gives us what’s best, and see how Jesus is why we celebrate because Jesus is God’s gift to the world.



We will begin practicing for our Christmas Program this Sunday, December 3.

Our program will be at the beginning of service on December 17th. More info will be coming in an email shortly.

Upcoming dates:

- December 3 - Sunday School with Christmas Program Rehearsal
- December 10 - Sunday School with Christmas Program Rehearsal
- December 17 - Sunday School Program followed by Christmas Party
- December 24 - **NO Sunday School**

As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions.
Merry Christmas!

-Kerrie Samuelian

CONFIRMATION

As we begin to bid farewell to the fall semester, our dedicated confirmands continue to diligently attend classes, actively participate in acolyte duties, engage in impactful service projects, and showcase their spiritual growth with their W.O.W notes. The students in Confirmation are now wrapping up their lessons on the Old Testament during their Bible year curriculum. Their commitment and enthusiasm shine brightly, making this a truly meaningful journey for each participant. We look forward to having fun activities in class together in preparation for Christmas!



LYO



In November, LYO celebrated the spirit of togetherness at our annual Friendsgiving, creating cherished moments filled with laughter and friendship. Each student contributed the warmth of their favorite dishes, fostering a sense of community through shared meals. Amidst the joyful meal, LYO also enjoyed friendly competition through games of ping pong and cards in our newly dedicated space, making the occasion truly unforgettable! LYO looks forward to spending more time together this December through service and fellowship opportunities.

New LYO participants of any grade 9-12 are ALWAYS welcome! Please email Kate (Kate.Mueller@EpiphanyElmhurst.org) if you, a friend, or someone you know would like to be added to the weekly email list for LYO parents and youth. We're also working on a new text system to keep everyone posted about regular LYO events.

LYO DECEMBER MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 3 – LYO, 10:45 a.m., LYO Room

Sunday, December 10 - LYO, 10:45 a.m., LYO Room

Sunday, December 17 - LYO, 10:45 a.m., LYO Room

Sunday, December 24 – NO LYO

Sunday, December 31 – NO LYO

Please stay tuned to LYO weekly e-news/texts for the most current updates, and you can also follow us on Instagram [@epiphanylyo](https://www.instagram.com/epiphanylyo)!

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE STUDY



The Sunday Morning Bible Study group will meet on Sunday, December 10 from 10:45 a.m.-noon. All sessions will convene in the room directly across from the church library. We will continue our informal discussions of the New Testament. For more information contact Phil Darling at (630) 291-0721 or John Swasko at (708) 650-1047.

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit
with Professor Matthew L. Skinner

December 6, 13, 20
7-8 p.m. (Meets via Zoom)

The Acts of the Apostles is a unique and crucial book that chronicles the story of God's grace flooding out to the world through the lives of the apostles in the decades immediately following Christ's ascension into heaven.

Our study will be enriched by videos by the author and biblical scholar Matthew Skinner and readings from his book, **Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit**. Skinner will lead us in a broad yet theologically attuned introduction to this important book and its story of the early church learning to bear witness about God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

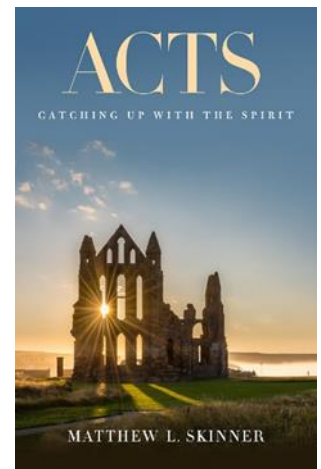
Copies of Professor Skinner's book are available in the church office for \$10. **PLEASE NOTE THAT READING FOR THE BIBLE STUDY SESSIONS IS NOT REQUIRED. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO JOIN US FOR THE CLASS SESSIONS ONLY IF YOU PREFER.**

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://epiphanyelmhurst.zoom.us/j/6308328457>
To join by phone: (312) 626-6799, enter meeting ID: 630 832 8457

2024 **Wednesday Evening Bible Study** calendar:

January 3-February 7
February 14-March 20
April 3-May 8

The Sermon on the Mount
Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross
Moses: In the Footsteps of a Reluctant Prophet

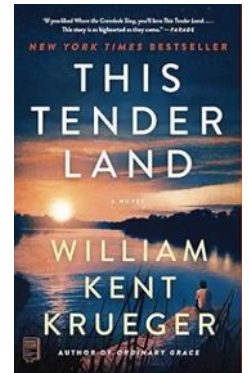


READING WITH THE REV

December 19, 2023

7-8:30 p.m. (Meets via ZOOM)

This Tender Land
William Kent Krueger



This Tender Land is the unforgettable story of four orphans who travel the Mississippi River on a life-changing odyssey during the Great Depression.

Over the course of the summer of 1932, four orphans from the Lincoln Indian Training School journey into the unknown and cross paths with others who are adrift, from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds. With the feel of a modern classic, *This Tender Land* is an enthralling, big-hearted epic that shows how the magnificent American landscape connects us all, haunts our dreams, and makes us whole.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://epiphanyelmhurst.zoom.us/j/6308328457>

To join by phone: (312) 626-6799, enter meeting ID: 630 832 8457

INTERESTED IN

BAPTISM?

Are you interested in having your child baptized at Epiphany? If so, please speak with or email Pastor Ron, Ron.Feltman@EpiphanyElmhurst.org.

OUTREACH NEWS

TREE OF LOVE AND CARING



Thank you all who signed up to provide Christmas gifts for children whose families are involved with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI)'s Intact Family Services program through the Tree of Love and Caring. **Please return all gifts by Sunday, December 3** so that the outreach committee can prepare them for pick up by LSSI.

Thank you Epiphany for once again helping to brighten the holidays for families in need!

NEWS FROM THE ILLINOIS COMMUNITY FOR DISPLACED IMMIGRANTS (ICDI)

Epiphany, thank you for your generosity! We have been able to provide about 200 snack packs for arriving immigrants. Thank you LYO for assembling the packs!

Our collection of snack pack items is ongoing. The need is still huge. You just have to listen to the news or read the papers to understand the complicated problem of the arriving migrants.

Besides the snack pack items, we can help by providing \$10 McDonald gift certificates. ICDI found this to be an easy way to provide a hot meal to those sleeping in the police stations. There is easy access to McDonald's around the police stations.

Another way to help is by shopping on Amazon with the ICDI Amazon wish list. Their wish list includes basic clothing items and is easy to use. Use the link provided.

To summarize: we are still collecting individually packaged, shelf stable items for snack packs. These include: dried fruit or vegan gummy fruit snacks, nuts, protein and breakfast bars, chips and pretzels, apple sauce, and cookies. Place items in the bin on the table of sharing. Place \$10 McDonald's gift cards in the envelope which is inside the bin on the table of sharing.

Check out the website icdichicago.org for more information about ICDI and other ways to get involved.

Again, Thank you Epiphany!

ICDI Illinois Community for
Displaced Immigrants

**We have an urgent need for
small, medium, and large
undergarments and clothing
for men and women!**

Please utilize
our Amazon
Wishlist to
donate what
you can.

JOIN THE ROMEOS

Are you retired or working from home and would like to get out? The ROMEOs usually meet the third Wednesday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at Fresh Start Café. They will meet next on **Wednesday, December 20**. Contact David Norquist (630) 310-0934 or Wes Odean (630) 605-1147 for more information.



PRETZEL PICK-UP



Thank you to all who purchased pretzels to support our youth during our recent fundraiser! Some pretzels still need to be picked up. They are available in the upstairs freezer. If you haven't picked up your pretzels, please do so at your convenience.

If you are interested in learning more about or joining Epiphany, please contact Pastor Ron in the office at (630) 832-8457 or via email at Ron.Feltman@EpiphanyElmhurst.org.



A donation in loving memory of Pastor Ken Schroeder was received from Paul and Nadine Pietrantoni.

A donation in loving memory of John Halen was received from Babette Halen.

EPIPHANY EARNS EARTH FLAG CERTIFICATION!

A proclamation by DuPage County Board Chair Deb Conroy was presented to Epiphany Church Council on Monday, November 27 by Sheila Rutledge, Chair of the Environmental Committee. The Earth Flag represents Epiphany's commitment to protecting the environment. District 2 Board Members Paula Deacon Garcia and Yeena Yoo were also in attendance as well as Kay McKeen and Emily King from SCARCE. Check out the Earth Flag currently hanging in the Epiphany Center!

Thank you to everyone who participated in this achievement—from the Rejoice and Renew Campaign to the more recent recycling and conservation efforts, every little bit adds up!



ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS BY DECEMBER 17

It's time to order your Holiday Poinsettias! They will beautify the church Christmas Eve, and then they are yours to take home following a Christmas Eve service.

Price: \$26.50 per plant

Please fill out the information below. You can put the order form and payment in the offering plate or drop it off in the Church Office. **All orders are due by Sunday, December 17.**

If you have any questions, please call Donna Lamoureux at (630) 564-7149.

Thank you!



POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Number of Poinsettias: _____

(\$26.50 each—please include payment making checks payable to “*Epiphany Lutheran Church.*”)

PICTURES FROM LYO EVENTS

A fun time was had by all at this year's LYO Friendsgiving. There was quite a yummy spread as well!



Despite being “snowed out” for the Rake & Run, LYOsers were still able to perform service. The youth put together snack packs to help the refugees. Way to go, LYO!



PRESCHOOL DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP SCHEDULE



Buttons and Bows Preschool is back in session! We are blessed to have many children present in our building throughout the week. Listed below are weekday time periods that our parking lot will be busiest due to drop-off and pick-up times for the children.

Monday—Friday

8:15 - 9:00 a.m.

11:00 - 11:30 a.m.

11:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.m.

2:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Epiphany members and guests are still welcome to access the building during these times but are advised that parking and main parking lot entrance will be busy.

OUR HEALTHY CHURCH POLICY

Worshippers and guests to the church building are no longer required to wear a mask. We know that some feel more comfortable and safe continuing to wear a mask, and you are welcome to do so. We ask for respect for whatever choice is made regarding mask-wearing.

We have resumed offering Holy Communion at the altar. The pastors and worship assistants will offer a wafer and an individual cup of wine. Intinction (dipping the wafer into the common cup of wine) is no longer an option. Again, we know that some will be more comfortable continuing to receive the elements in their seats. Those who wish to commune in their seats should let an usher know and the elements will be brought to you in your seat.

We ask that those who are ill or showing signs of COVID-19 please worship using our live streaming option.





BIRTHDAYS

1	James Morrell, Brian Schleich	14	Graham Biery, Madeline Schleich
3	Scott Bonthron, Charlie Sutton	15	Marilyn DeVries, Erin Lewis,
4	Charlotte Hall, Adam Haukland, Kim Mehring		Jacob Lupa, Julia Neri
5	Taylor Allen, Josie Heard	17	Erin Ewald, Kristi Gibbs
6	Gracie Durham, Tony Hall	18	Phil Darling, Wendy Russo
7	Madyson Hudson	19	Karen Fitzer
8	Tessa Martin, Madden Michalski, George Redfearn	21	Erik Berg
9	Dan Wachholz	23	Victoria Biery
10	Fred Antlsperger, Joan Lux, Joy Wieska	24	Travis Allen, Nathan Wick
12	Phyllis Field, Rachael Gould, Melinda Hudson	25	Lori Lewis
13	Kaylee Ewald, Rebecca Hartley, Blair Porter	27	Owen Stufflebeam, Arlene Taylor
		28	Sheila Durbin, Kim Kortess
		29	Jessica Sutherland
		30	Nancy Langer
		31	Camden Hildy

ANNIVERSARIES

8	Robert and Judy Scheuerman	28	Christian and Erin Ewald
16	David and Joyce McGowan	30	Tracy and Cathy Hunt
20	Colleen and Michael Korzen		



IN OUR PRAYERS

* (Please contact Joan Halvey if we missed anyone.)

OUR CURRENT PRAYER LIST*

IN OUR PRAYERS

Our members: Dolores Barney, Gwen Becker, Ruth Blair, Curt Clifford, Marjorie DeSombre, Sheila Durbin, Bill Edwards, Wilbur Lippert, Molly Loeser, Joan Lux, Wes Odean, Joy Wieska

We extend our sympathies to the family of John Halen (husband of Babette), who died November 7.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF MEMBERS*

Our friends: Jolene Allen (friend of Scott and Debbie Hawkins), John Austin (friend of the Witzel family), Tyler Bailey (Arlene Taylor's nephew), Greg and Sue Bukowski (friends of Sandra Vaughn), Casey (friend of Stacy Hildy), Cindy Dettloff (Diane Solem's sister-in-law), Dettman family (friends of the Redfearns), Jenny Dias Da Costa (friend of the Schleich family), Amy Dill (sister-in-law of Rhonda Berg), Donna and Gary Diven (sister and brother-in-law of Gary Sanders, Sr.), Kathleen Duda (daughter of Joan Lux and Gerard Duda), Laura Dybas (friend of Bill Bringman and Jill Setterlun), Eleanor Feld (aunt to Lisa Budris), Jim Feltman (Pastor Ron's father), Vern, Donna, and Kara Field (son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter of Phyllis Field), Jeffrey Fuka (friend of Dolores Barney), Robert Groh (brother-in-law of Joan Lux and Gerard Duda), Lorna Hansen (Amy Rimington's mother), Jan Harms (Jen Mann's mother), Jan Henderson (friend of Deb and Scott Hawkins), Marilyn Hirtle (friend of Phyllis Field), Hannah Hodgson (Lois Hodgson's daughter-in-law), Neil Kleinbort (friend of Shirley Swanson and Ted Mandigo), Linda (friend of the Ernst family), Lindsay Larson (Andrea Redfearn's niece), Marianna Levy (Gerard Duda's sister), Karen McCaa (Amy Pilny's sister), Barbara McKay (Lila Peters' niece), Carolyn McLaughlin (friend of Dolores Barney), Michael McPeters (Aimee McPeters' brother), Evan Thomas Mevis (Ruth Blair's grandson), Donna Mueller (sister of Jim Mueller), the Mueller family (friends of the Allens), Gail Nerison, O'Brien family (friends of Amy VanDenBrook), Jim Pacini (friend of many Epiphany members), Joseph Paumier (Ben Paumier's father), Nancy Peterson (friend of the Tengroths), the Pickering family (friends of Chris Wilbur), Emily and Christopher Pierce (friends of Lila Peters), Eileen Pietraszek (long-time, former member of Epiphany/member of Hannah's), Carol Raimondi (friend of Kerrie Samuelian), Amber and James Randall (friends of Gwen Becker), Kim Redlich (friend of Rod Durham), Lisa Reichardt (friend of Bill Bringman and Jill Setterlun), Rosemary (friend of Sandy Vaughn), the Rowley family (friends of Nancy Innocentini), John Ross, Colleen Schramm (friend of Nancy Innocentini), Karen Scott (friend of Curt Clifford), Christel Schubert (mother of Ingrid Durham, Russ Setterlun (relative of Jill Setterlun/Bill Bringman), the Specht family (friends of Andrea Redfearn), Carole Streetz (friend of Lisa Budris), Pat Swanson (Shirley Swanson's sister-in-law), Jenna and Bryce Taft (extended family of Phyllis Field), Irma Tena (friend of the Johnson family), Lena Troye (relative of the McGonigles, McPhersons, and Tengroths), Kurt Walters (relative of Bill Bringman and Jill Setterlun), Mary Witzel (Joe Witzel's mother), David Livingstone Zijjan (Pastor of Father's Divine Love Ministry)

STAFF DIRECTORY

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Paul Halvey	Custodian	Paul.Halvey@EpiphanyElmhurst.org

In the event of a pastoral need or emergency, please contact Pastor Feltman at (339) 203-7214.

*Pastor Roper in on parental leave through December 31, 2023.

Thank you to everyone who submits articles to *The Star*. Articles submitted are subject to review by the editor.

Any significant revisions will be discussed with the author of the article.

You may email contributions to: Joan.Halvey@EpiphanyElmhurst.org

Deadline for submissions for the January, 2024 edition is Friday, December 22.