

December 2023 Newsletter

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From the Pastor's Desk

Advent begins. It can so easily become a frantic season of getting ready for Christmas: shopping, decorating, partying. Or, conversely, some folks are alone, perhaps mourning a loss or depressed or ill.

And then we look at the world around us—if we dare. Wars. Weather events. Poverty. Racism. Climate change. Political brokenness. Things are in a mess, and, if we are honest with ourselves, we are haunted by the question: Where is God ?



The biblical texts during the season of Advent offer us insights, and yes, gifts, on how to live during this season. In particular, the readings for the first Sunday of Advent have much to ponder. The readings do not shy from asking the question of where is God, but rather face it head on, both naming and lamenting God's hiddenness. "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down," cries Isaiah. "Restore us, O Lord of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved," pleads the Psalmist. "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken," says Jesus in Mark's Gospel, describing a state of godless catastrophe

We enter this first season of the church year— if we dare enter it at all — in lamentation. " Our world is not okay," is what these Advent readings declare in stark terms. God's apparent absence is not okay— it hurts. It hurts so much we can barely breathe from the agony of it.

The first gift of Advent is the permission to tell the truth, even if that truth is laced with sorrow. We are called to speak the whole truth: we need God. We need God to show up. We need God to stay. We need God to love, hold, deliver, and restore us.

The second gift of the season is less a gift than a discipline. It is the discipline of waiting. During Advent, we live with quiet anticipation in the "not yet." We stop rushing, and decide to call sacred what is yet in-process and unformed.

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Thirdly, Advent prepares us for the God who is coming — a God who will turn out to be very different from the one we expect and maybe even hope to find.

So. Here we are, wrestling with the brokenness of the world and the hiddenness of our God. Here we are, voicing our laments and registering our yearnings. Here we are, waiting. Here we are, preparing ourselves for the God who is coming.

“Oh, that you would tear the heavens and come down.” This is an honest prayer, and we need not fear it. It's okay to pray into the silence, the hiddenness, and the absence. It's okay to struggle with Advent and its complicated gifts.

So pray and wait. Wait and pray. As much as you can, be patient. Be still. Hope fiercely. Deep in the gathering dark, something tender is forming. Something beautiful — something for the world's saving — waits to be born.

Blessings,
Pastor LaVonne



A graphic with three vertical color bands: green on the left, blue in the middle, and purple on the right. The text is white and bold. The background of the purple band shows a blurred image of hands holding a book. The text reads: "CONGREGATIONAL MEETING PLEASE JOIN US Saturday, December 2nd at 12pm Please try to attend." At the bottom left, the word "CONGREGATIONAL" is written in small letters, and at the bottom right, "MEETING" is written in small letters.

November 2023 Worship Services

Worship time is 9 am Sunday morning - all in-person worship services continue to be offered online [via Facebook Live](#) for those who are unable or unwilling to attend worship in person. Holy Communion is offered at all in-person worship services unless otherwise indicated.

Sunday Morning Worship Services

All Sunday worship services are held in person and online at 9 am at Collierville Presbyterian Church with the exception of Sunday, Dec. 24th, which will be at 3pm.

December 3, 2023 Worship Service w/ Holy Communion - First Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2023 Worship Service w/ Holy Communion - Second Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023 Worship Service w/ Holy Communion - Third Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023—**3pm** Worship Service w/ Holy Communion - Fourth Sunday of Advent, Christmas Eve (no morning service)

[Instructions for watching via Facebook Live](#)

Coffee Hour and Fellowship immediately following worship

December 3rd & 17th



Epiphany's Core Values — Faithfulness, Inclusion, Love

Our Guiding Principles

We accept and appreciate your presence.

We serve everyone.

We grow personally through the word of God.

We are God's hands, feet, and voice to serve our community.

We rejoice and share in the love of God.

Our Purpose — to welcome all, sharing God's promises and love through our actions.

Epiphany Financial Update

In October, tithing was slightly below budget (2% below). We are now even with the budget YTD. Meanwhile, Expenses were 9% under budget for the month and 6% under budget YTD. For any end of year extra donations beyond regular tithing, please indicate what they should be used for. For example, Loan Principal, or General Funds.

	Oct-23			2023 YTD		
	Actual	Budget	Net	Actual	Budget	Net
Revenue	\$ 6,639	\$ 6,483	\$ 156	\$ 74,112	\$ 74,250	-\$ 138
Expenses (incl. Loan)	\$ 7,171	\$ 7,901	-\$ 730	\$ 77,292	\$ 82,010	-\$ 4,718
Net	-\$ 532	-\$ 1,418	\$ 886	-\$ 3,180	-\$ 7,760	\$ 4,580

Donate

As always, you may mail your check to Epiphany (see address below) or give via ACH bank draft ([click here for instructions](#)).



We also accept tithes and offerings as well as payments to special funds (Property Fund, Food Pantry Fund, Hispanic Food Pantry - El Redentor) through PayPal. [Please visit our website](#) and click on the PayPal button at the top of the home page to donate. (You may have to refresh your website or delete cookies to use the button more than once.) You may also click on the PayPal logo above.



You may also mail checks to: Epiphany Lutheran Church. P.O. Box 1805, Collierville, TN 38027

Kroger Community Rewards

[Click here to register](#) with Kroger's Community Rewards program.

We are registered as Epiphany Lutheran Church, organization #39854.





*Epiphany Christmas Dinner
at the Schumacher's*

*Saturday December 9th at 6pm
249 Beckham Drive, Collierville*

*Kindly respond by December 3rd to
Becca at 901-464-0674*

*Please bring
BYOB*

*Sign up for a 9x13 dish to share
Bring a \$10 gift per person for Dirty Santa Exchange
(Christmas related)*



*Thank you to all who filled
out your annual pledge cards.*

The Church Council is looking for new members for 2024. Contact Martha Garner if you are willing to help.

***December's meeting has been rescheduled to December 12th at 7pm due to Christmas.*






Christmas Eve Communion Worship Service

Sunday, December 24 at 3pm.

Worshipping at 202 W. Poplar Avenue in Collierville.

Let Us Adore Him

**There will not be a morning service.



God is with us!

Holy Moments Workshop

Saturday, December 2

10am—12pm

Join us for a workshop utilizing the book by Matthew Kelly, *Holy Moments*. All are welcome as we use this book to prepare our hearts and minds for Advent.



Social Ministries/Outreach



On the first Sunday of every month in 2023, we will be collecting change to benefit the Alpha Omega Veterans Association. To date we have collected \$300.96! Please help us support this worthy organization - **our next collection is Sunday, December 3. Thanks for your support!**

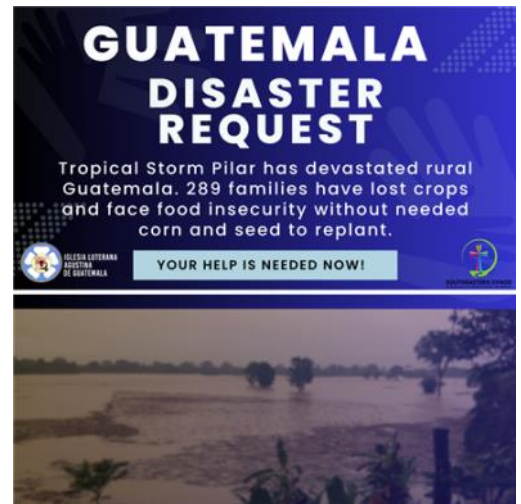


SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Synod News

Tropical Storm Pilar has done significant damage to rural Guatemala and has impacted many families in our companion church [ILAG] Iglesia Luterana Augustina Guatemala. According to Pastora Karen Castillo, President of the ILAG, 289 families have lost their crops in the storm and are looking at experiencing food deprivation without needed corn and seed to replant their crops again. Click on the link below to give now. Enter an amount on the line designated "Guatemala Disaster Response."

[Give Now](#)



Shopping for someone who has everything they need? Check out ELCA Good Gifts and choose from 50 charitable gifts to give in honor of friends or loved ones this Christmas. From goats to water wells, there's something for everyone on your list. Each gift makes a difference in the world and shares the love of Christ with our neighbors in need.

[Click here for Good Gifts](#)



As we prepare our hearts and minds for the recognition of Christ Jesus and his birth this Advent season, we encourage all of you to join the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA in a 25-mile journey to Bethlehem. We invite you to commit to the following:

- For 25 days (December 1-25)
- Walk 1 mile per day
- Donate \$25 to benefit Augusta Victoria Hospital

Collierville Christmas Parade

Friday, December 1, at 7pm

Collierville's 46th annual Christmas Parade will take place Friday, December 1, 2023 at 7pm. Thousands of spectators line the parade route from Byhalia Road north of White Road at Polo Run Road to West Collierville Middle School. Rain date is Saturday, December 2.



Christmas in Collierville Saturdays

Saturdays, November 25th—December 16th, 10am-2pm

On Saturdays, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, families can visit Santa in the Gazebo (10am-2pm) and enjoy special music performances designed to get you in the holiday spirit. In addition to photo opportunities with Santa, special features include:

December 2:

- ✿ Opera Memphis Strolling Carolers, 11:30-2pm

December 9:

- ✿ Model Train Displays, 10-2pm
- ✿ Choir performances by Tara Oaks Elem. School and Sycamore Elem.

December 16:

- ✿ Model Train Displays, 10-2pm
- ✿ Free hot chocolate by the Depot Visitors Center, 10-2pm
- ✿ Performance by Visions Academy of Performing Arts

Carriage Rides

November 24 - December 30, 2023

Carriage rides provided by Cunningham Tours will allow guests to experience the magical glow of Collierville's historic district this holiday season. Carriages hold 5-6 people; \$30 per trip. Evening carriage rides will be offered November 24-December 30, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, 5:00-8:00 p.m. Changes in the schedule due to weather or unforeseen circumstances will be posted at colliervilletn.gov/christmas. For questions, please call Parks Administration at (901) 457-2770, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm.



Investing in Epiphany Lutheran Church

If You Are Over 72

As many of you know, if you have an IRA investment account and you are over 72 you are required to take a minimum distribution from that account each year. What you might not be aware of is that you can make contributions to any charitable organization from this distribution and those contributions are tax exempt. It is excellent way to make a contribution to Epiphany. You should check with your investment advisor and find out how you can take advantage of this benefit.

At Any Age

If you have an investment portfolio with significant gains, ask your financial advisor about setting up a charitable donor-advised fund. You can transfer stock, mutual funds, etc. directly to it without paying capital gains and that transfer counts as a charitable contribution for your itemized deductions. Many investment companies sponsor donor-advised charitable funds (e.g., Fidelity, Schwab, Vanguard); some banks (such as Bank of America) offer them as well. You can then manage this donor-advised fund to donate to charities (including Epiphany) whenever you want.



Staff Gifts

During this special time of year, Epiphany Lutheran Church will be collecting for our annual gifts to Church staff members. This gift will show our appreciation for all that our staff do for us during the year. Please write a check to the church with 'Staff Gift' in the memo or [click here to use PayPal](#) and select 'Staff Christmas Gifts' from the drop-down menu. Deadline for giving is December 15, 2023. Thank you for your support.

Martha Garner

[Click here](#) to find out what's happening at your library!



Collierville
BURCH
LIBRARY



Town of
Collierville
TENNESSEE

[Click here](#) to find out what's happening in your town!

December 2023 Calendar of Events

(Please [check our calendar online](#) for the most up-to-date information)

	Pastor LaVonne's Office Hours	Pastor LaVonne holds office hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays - please e-mail her to make an appointment.
Sat 12/2	10am - Holy Moments 12pm - Congregational Meeting	Special workshop using the Holy Moments book by Matthew Kelly Annual budget, proposed by-law change
Sun 12/3	9 am - CPC and via Facebook Live	First Sunday of Advent Worship Service w/ Holy Communion Coffee Hour & Fellowship
Sat 12/9	6pm - Christmas Dinner	Dinner at the Schumacher's. BYOB, sign up to bring a dish to share. Bring a \$10 Christmas gift for Dirty Santa.
Sun 12/10	9am - CPC and via Facebook Live	Second Sunday of Advent Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
Mon 12/12	7 pm - Via Zoom	Church Council Meeting Join here: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85341174437
Sun 12/17	9 am - CPC and via Facebook Live	Third Sunday of Advent Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
Sun 12/24	3pm - CPC and via Facebook Live **No morning service	Fourth Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve Worship Service w/ Holy Communion

December 2023 Prayers

Every month, the ELCA provides its Prayer Ventures for member congregations. The link to the monthly prayers can always be found on our website on the [Christian Education page](#), along with an ELCA Daily Bible Reading and Luther Seminary's God Pause Daily Devotion. [Here is the link for this month's prayers.](#)

You may also access our Epiphany Lutheran Church prayer list [here](#). If you would like to add someone to the prayer list, [please email Linda Stamps](#).



Happiest of Birthdays and God's Blessings!

Only one birthday to celebrate in December—
Jesus, our Lord and Savior.



Have we missed **your** birthday? [Please send the month/day to Linda Stamps \(lutheran.epiphany@gmail.com\)](#) so you can be included!

December 2023 Worship Servants

Worship servants still needed for Sundays in October - please consider volunteering!

Want to know more about being a worship servant? [You can review the duties and guidelines here.](#)



Worship Servant SignUp Genius

[2023 SignUp](#)

If you need assistance, [email Linda Stamps](#) - she will be happy to help you sign up if you have any issues!

[View current prayers](#)

Please send your [prayer requests to Linda Stamps](#). You may also [submit a prayer request online here](#).

Thank You!



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Epiphany Lutheran Church

Worship Location

Collierville Presbyterian Church (USA)

202 W. Poplar Avenue

Collierville, TN 38017

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 1805

Collierville, TN 38027

Rev. LaVonne Johnson

Email

Website

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

YouTube

pastor@epiphanylu.org

info@epiphanylu.org

www.epiphanylu.org

www.facebook.com/EpiphanyLutheran

www.twitter.com/epiphanyville

<https://www.instagram.com/epiphanylutherancollierville>