

DECEMBER 2024

# THE LIGHT



A NEWSLETTER OF EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, BASTROP, TEXAS

## From the Pastor's Desk

It says so in the Bible!

So much of human heartache stems from miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misplaced intention. In one Peanuts comic strip, Lucy exclaims to her brother Linus, "You HAVE to give me a Christmas present! It says so in the Bible!"

In my job as a pastor, I hear a lot of things. Sinners we are all—mistake-prone and often too easily swayed, not so much by conventional wisdom, but by popular opinion. What does the Bible say about giving Christmas presents? We actually have a great, unchanging reference manual from which the truth would rise up and bubble out if we'd open it. The Bible says a lot of things (about a lot of things!), but it doesn't say "You HAVE to give me a Christmas present!"

In a very general sense, I would say that the Bible—God's Word—in all of its many versions and forms is too often misquoted and misunderstood. Without our help or good intentions, the Bible is the greatest love story ever told. It's about the Creator's undying (and, sadly, unrequited) love for His creations, a sentiment repeated over and over within its pages (most notably in John 3:16).

'Tis the season for that oldie-but-goodie "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Were the magi, these "three kings," really three? Or kings? (See Matthew 2). During certain cycles of life (like the frenetic holiday season), we can feel overwhelmed, as though the tide has come in and we're slowly drowning in debt, schedule conflicts, health and relationship issues, etc. It's then that the well-meaning church-goer sidles up alongside to offer this nugget of advice, meant to help us get a grip: "God never gives us more than we can handle." This is simply not true (see 1 Corinthians 10-13), and yet one missing word really makes all the difference. "God never gives us more than we can handle ALONE." Sometimes we need "a leap of faith," another cliché not found in Scripture.

To take "a leap of faith" means "to believe in something with no evidence for it" or "to attempt an endeavor that has little chance of success." A biblical step of faith is far from a blind leap (see 2 Corinthians 5:7).

But what about those words and topics that cause so many in the world today to wield  
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## Our Pastor



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## Services

@Bastrop SDA Church  
3300 East State Highway 21

Sunday School 10:00 am  
Fellowship 11:00 am  
Divine Service 11:30 am

## Church Council

Jeremy Clifton,  
President/Elder  
512-309-5133  
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Dave Layland, Elder  
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## Pastor's Note Continued

God's Word like a flaming sword (see Genesis 3:24) to defend a behavior, doctrine, or agenda? A few that come to mind are "abortion," "homosexuality," "trinity," "rapture," "gender issues," and my personal favorite, "the definition of marriage." Not one of these words or phrases is found in the pages of Scripture. But God speaks to each.

When reading the Bible, God's love story, it's very important to follow two cardinal rules of thumb: 1) We cling to what God says, not to what He doesn't say, and 2) we let Scripture interpret Scripture to discern God's Word more accurately. For example, while the word "trinity" is not used by God, He clearly reveals Himself to us in Three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit (Luke 3:21-22, Matthew 28:18-20).

Being clueless about God's Word complicates matters for a world that surely doesn't believe that after God forbade Adam and Eve from doing so, a talking snake goaded Eve into eating a forbidden apple (see God's version in Genesis 3). The Christian Church has a beautiful Christmas theology (see Luke 2:8-20); however, for a world of that is more familiar with flying reindeer, the Grinch, and a little drummer boy than the more incredible story of the birth of Jesus (whose name means "God saves"), Christmas is a time of hope—for more stuff.

Lucy's sentiments to Linus are, of course, understandable. The celebration of Christmas in our culture includes gift-giving, but what puts Christ in "Christmas" is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise that God would send someone greater than Moses to dwell among and save mankind.

Christmas is not about the gifts under the tree for you and me; Christmas is about God's gift to us all of a baby in the manger. It says so in the Bible!

## Anniversaries

Dave and Deb Layland December 22



**Epiphany has a podcast!** It is available on popular podcast apps, or at [peacebewithyou.podbean.com](http://peacebewithyou.podbean.com)



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**EPIPHANY**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH LCMS



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Epiphany Lutheran Church



@epiphanybastrop

# Yay God!

## BLESSINGS FOR A NEW MOTHER

Thanks to the generous hearts of the congregation, we collected \$350 during our freewill Advent offering for a young mother-to-be with whom we connected through the pro-life organization, The Human Coalition, a comprehensive care network that reaches women facing unexpected pregnancies, rescues innocent preborn children from abortion, and restores families to stability.



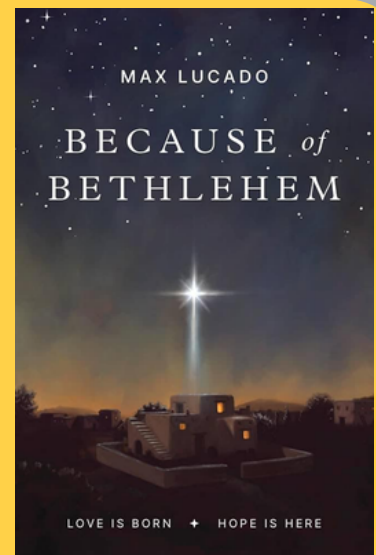
## Midweek Advent Family Fellowship Wednesday, December 18, 6:30pm, at the Rossers

### Advent Zoom Study

Thursdays @ 6pm  
continuing until December 19

Join us on Zoom for a look at the real meaning of Christmas in this four-session Advent study

Plenty of room, so invite a friend!  
Register now: [bit.ly/ELC-Bethlehem](https://bit.ly/ELC-Bethlehem)



### *1st Annual Epiphany Lutheran Church Spend the Year in Scripture Challenge*

Sunday Dec. 29, we'll kick off the challenge, a user-friendly (and smartphone-friendly!) guided reading plan to start on January 1

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Voter's Meeting

Sunday, December 15, immediately following service

This bi-annual meeting will be to pass the budget for 2025, and elect (or re-elect) folks to fill these council seats: president, treasurer, secretary. If you'd be interested in serving on the council or would like to nominate someone (must be a full communicant member) to serve, please contact president, Jeremy Clifton.



## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 6PM at SDA Campus

*There will be no Christmas Day Service*



С Рождеством! – Merry Christmas!  
... From the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society

Thank you for the prayers and support you have given to the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society this past year. Because of your care and concern, the ministries of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Seminary in Novosibirsk continue. May Christ's light and peace be with you this Christmas and throughout the New Year



As you prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus this Advent, will you also remember the Lutheran Church in Russia in your prayers. Lutherans there continue to need your prayer support, especially now in the midst of world conflict. The attached Advent Calendar can prompt your prayer thoughts as you scan some of the highlights that have shaped the history of the Lutheran Church in Russia. Share it with friends and others in your congregation. Your prayers for the Church in Russia matter — always!

Twice monthly devotion and prayer gathering

MEETS TUESDAYS AT 3PM

Argent Court Assisted Living

JOIN US FOR

**MAKE EVERY  
DAY COUNT**



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## What's Happening at Epiphany



Besides our monthly newsletter, there are some other ways to keep up with the current happenings:

### Calendar

Our congregational calendar is on our website ([epiphanybastrop.org](http://epiphanybastrop.org)); to add an event, email [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

### Facebook:

Check out our page, Epiphany Lutheran Church, for pictures and events

**rightnow** MEDIA



**FOR FREE ACCESS TO RIGHTNOW MEDIA, VISIT [APP.RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/JOIN/ELCB](http://APP.RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/JOIN/ELCB)**

Epiphany now has unlimited access to RightNow Media—the world's largest streaming library of video Bible study resources. This extensive library has more than 20,000 videos that can be used as part of a group study or for personal devotions, and many series include free discussion guides and handouts. In addition to series on books of the Bible, RightNow Media has videos for everyone in the family on a variety of topics like marriage, parenting, personal finances, mental health, and more. There's even a library just for kids with over 2,000 safe, entertaining videos. RightNow Media has a free app that's available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime.

## Becoming a Member

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless— it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

# COMMUNITY NEWS



*Faith Lutheran High School of Central Texas seeks to engage young adults in a Christ-centered environment where faith and knowledge grow as one.*  
**HOME OF THE FALCONS!**

## **Seeking a German Teacher**

FLHS rejoices with the Obersat family as they have accepted a new call to serve in Wyoming, however, this leaves Faith without a German teacher following Christmas break. Faith Lutheran High School is actively seeking a part-time German teacher for the spring semester of 2025. All interested candidates are encouraged to call to learn more about this position. Please reach out to Mrs. Kueck at [\(979\) 242-2889](tel:9792422889). If you have the time and talents, please consider sharing your gifts with our students. Thank you!

## **Raffle Items**

The Spring Raffle is just around the corner. The Board of Directors is currently looking for valuable items or monetary donations to be used in the raffle. Please contact Nikki Kueck if you have something to donate! Thank you!

## **End of Year Giving**

In Proverbs 2:6, God's Word promises: "The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." Faith Lutheran High School exists to instill Christ's wisdom in His Word to prepare faithful leaders for tomorrow. Thank you for being a part of this mission through your prayers and financial support. Please prayerfully consider how you can give to further Lutheran education in our area. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Mrs. Nikki Kueck.

## **Thank you!**

Everyone at FLHS is blessed by each gift that we receive from our supporters. It's not about the size of the gift, but the cheerful attitude that gives thanks to God (2 Corinthians 9:7). Whether your gift seems big or small, it is greatly appreciated and makes a bigger impact than you know!

## **Oktoberfest**

Thank you to everyone who participated in any way with this year's Oktoberfest event. This year's event raised about \$18,000 for FLHS! Praise the Lord! Next year's date is Saturday, October 25, 2025.

## **Sapientia Infiniti (infinite wisdom)**

Oktoberfest will be adding a new category to our Battle of the Brews/Vines. Spend this year preparing an infinity bottle\* of whiskey for yourself at home. Please submit a pint or half-pint of this bottle for the FLHS Oktoberfest 2025. Submissions will be judged, by our judges and the attendees, in separate categories.

\* Infinity Bottle rules: start with a clean, empty bottle. Throughout the year, add a pour of any size from the whiskeys you've enjoyed this year. KEEP NO RECORD! The infinity bottle is intended to be unique to you and unrepeatable.

# The Little Light

## What's happening in children's Sunday School?

### ENDURING FAITH



We are working through a special Christmas series, designed to engage children with the true meaning of Christmas through the vibrant colors of the season! Each session is built around a Christmas colour; green, red, white, blue, and gold. Each bringing the message of Jesus to life in a visually captivating and meaningful way.

**December 8 (Lesson 1 Everlasting Life)** **Green** symbolizes everlasting life. Children will learn how Jesus, who existed from the beginning, offers eternal life to those who believe in Him.

**December 15 (Lesson 2 Love and Sacrifice)** **Red** represents Jesus' love and sacrifice. This session focuses on the angel's announcement to Mary and Joseph, exploring Jesus' mission to save us from sin and His ultimate act of love on the cross.

**December 22 (Lesson 3 The Light of Jesus)** **White** symbolizes purity and light. Children will learn how Jesus is the Light of the World, washing away our sins and guiding us in truth.

**December 29 (Lesson 4 The Peace of Jesus)** **Blue** stands for the peace Jesus brings. Children will explore the angels' message to the shepherds and how Jesus offers peace with God and others, and how they can share His peace.

**January 5 (Lesson 5 The Kingship of Jesus)** **Gold** represents Jesus' kingship. Children will learn how the wise men honored Jesus as King of Kings and how He reigns in our hearts.

# Prayers of the People

Have a Prayer Request? Please share any prayer requests on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter for worship on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

Please continue to pray for

- Kathy - treatments for illness
- David - poor surgery outcome
- Nellie - breathing issues
- Tonya - tumor
- Deebo and Norma
- Charles - cancer
- Clayton - cancer
- Fritz
- Tom
- Rev. Timothy Dinger
- Family of Richard



# IN THE LIGHT U.

(Newsletter Seminary)

## *If Jesus is God, then who is Yahweh?*

The name *Yahweh* occurs more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament. It appears in every book but Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. As the sacred, personal name of Israel's God, it was eventually spoken aloud only by priests worshiping in the Jerusalem temple. After the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the name was not pronounced at all. *Adonay* was substituted for *Yahweh* whenever it appeared in the biblical text. Because of this, the correct pronunciation of this name was eventually lost. English editions of the Bible usually translate *Adonay* as "Lord" and *Yahweh* as "LORD." *Yahweh* is the name that is most closely linked to God's redeeming acts in the history of his chosen people. We know God because of what He has done—He is the same God who draws near to save you from the tyranny of sin just as he saved his people from tyrannical slavery in Egypt. In Exodus 3, God reveals His name to Moses.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."...

Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them... I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. (Exodus 3:1-3, 6-8, 10-15)

Afraid of profaning this covenant name of God, various rabbinical writers spoke of it as "The Name," "The Great and Terrible Name," "The Unutterable Name," "The Ineffable Name," "The Holy Name," and "The Distinguished Name." Also known as the Tetragrammaton, because it is formed by the four Hebrew consonants YHWH (JHVH in German), it was first rendered *Jehovah* in the Middle Ages and enshrined as such in the King James Version of the Bible (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4). This mispronunciation arose when in the 10th century Jewish scholars began supplying vowels to Hebrew words, which had formerly been written without them. Since *Adonay* was always substituted for *Yahweh* (pronounced yah-WEH, as scholars now think) in the biblical text, the Hebrew vowels for *Adonay* were inserted into the four letters of the Tetragrammaton: YaHoWaH.

Unfortunately, the translation "LORD," which is a title rather than a name, obscures the personal nature of this name for God. Though the meaning of *Yahweh* is disputed, the mysterious self-description in Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM," may convey the sense not only that God is self-existent but that he is always present with his people. *Yahweh* is not a God who is remote or aloof but one who is always near, intervening in history on behalf of his people. The knowledge of God's proper name implies a covenant relationship. God's covenant name is closely associated with his saving acts in Exodus. The name *Yahweh* evokes images of God's saving power in the lives of his people.

[From The Names of God by Ann Spangler, Zondervan, 2009]