

Sunday, December 21st 2025

Fourth Sunday in Advent



Connect. Grow. Multiply.

Mailing Address:

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WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!”
(Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.



OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

Because those who eat and drink our Lord’s body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor.

For further study, see Matthew 5:23; 10:32; 18:15-35; 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh
Musician – Gina Sanders
Lay Reader – Alison Parker
Assisting Elder – Alex Monroe
Usher – David Sager
Acolyte – E.J. Clontz

AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

God's Word Is Fulfilled for Us in the Flesh and Blood of Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary

The Fourth Sunday in Advent turns our attention toward the Nativity of Our Lord. With the blessed Virgin Mary, we await the coming of the Christ, her Son, conceived in her womb by the Word and Spirit of God. This fulfillment of the sign once given to the house of David, that *“the virgin shall conceive and bear a son”* (Is. 7:14), is now given to us in the Gospel. It declares that salvation is by His grace alone, entirely His work and a free gift. It also is the way and means by which the Lord our God is Immanuel, “God with us.” The almighty and eternal Son of God is conceived and born of Mary, and is thus *“descended from David according to the flesh”* (Rom. 1:3–4). He comes in this way to save us with His own flesh and blood; wherefore, He is called *“Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). As Joseph received this sign in faith and immediately *“did as the angel of the Lord commanded him”* (Matt. 1:24), we also live by faith in this Holy Gospel.

DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR

Prelude		Selected Music
Welcome and Greeting		Pastor
Announcements		
Opening Hymn	<i>“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed”</i>	LSB 398
<i>(stand)</i>		

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8

P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.** *Ps. 130:3-4*

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. *[Luke 18:13]*

C **Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

[John 20:19-23]

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Introit

Psalm 130:5-8

P I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

C **my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.**

P O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.

C **And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.*



C Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

(sit)

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 7:10-17

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

(stand)

Alleluia and Verse



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



C These things are writ - ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:31



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the first chapter.

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

(sit)

Hymn of the Day

“Come, Thou Precious Ranson, Come”

LSB 350

Sermon

Rated ‘M’ for Mature

Matthew 1:18-25

(stand)

Apostles’ Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life † everlasting. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace

(sit)

Prayer of the Church

P Lord, in Your mercy
C hear our prayer.

Offering

Usher

(stand)

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

Preface

P The Lord be with you. *2 Timothy 4:22*
C And also with you.
P Lift up your hearts.
C We lift them to the Lord. *[Colossians 3:1*
P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C It is right to give Him thanks and praise. *[Psalm 136]*

P It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the promised Messiah, the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san - na in the high-est, sing ho - san - na to the Lord;



Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

P Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

C Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

The Words of Our Lord

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

- P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
- P** In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pax Domini

John 20:19

- P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C Amen.

Agnus Dei

John 1:29



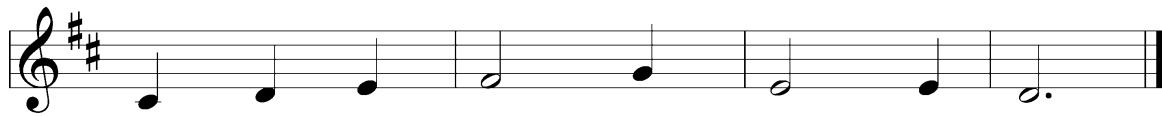
1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



You take the sin of the world a - way;
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,



Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

(sit)

Distribution Hymns

"I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table"
"Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love"

LSB 357
LSB 900

(stand)

Nunc Dimittis

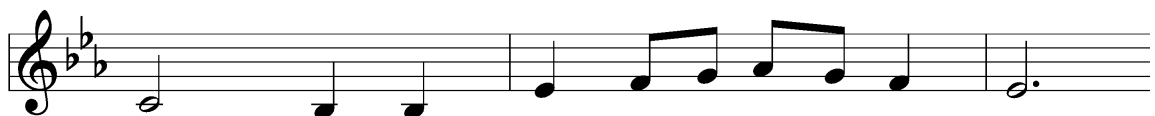
Luke 2:29-32



1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All



part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the



glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;



A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is



to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -



peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Post-Communion Collect

P Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus and Benediction

P Let us bless the Lord.

[Psalm 103:1]

C Thanks be to God.

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

C Amen.

(sit)

Closing Hymn

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

LSB 361

P Go in Peace!

C Serve the Lord!

Postlude

Selected Music

Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.



CATECHISM CORNER | *Bite-sized teachings from Luther's Small Catechism*

Written in 1529 in Q&A format, the Small Catechism explores the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

The Power of the Sacrament of the Altar

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

It is not the eating and drinking that does this, but the words here written, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." These words, along with the eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament; and whoever believes these words has exactly what they say, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

SERMON NOTES: Matthew 1:18-25

Rated 'M' for Mature

1. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of _____, did not count equality with _____ a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of _____.
(Philippians 2:5-7)
2. That Jesus was born in the likeness of _____—sinners like us—makes it easier to craft a _____ who must be like us in more ways than merely a _____ birth.
3. The _____ of Jesus fulfilled _____'s promises in a way that bypassed _____ expectations.
4. Only _____ can see a human _____ born of a virgin as the _____ promised by prophecy.
5. Only through _____ can we grasp the gravity of _____'s love for humanity in this baby born for the _____, to die so that we may live.
6. When _____ woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a _____. And he called his name _____. (Matthew 1:24-25)

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

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.

Epiphany Events Calendar: Our congregation calendar is on our website (epiphanybastrop.org); to add an event, please email secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Offering: Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home> or scan this QR code.



10am Adult Sunday School Series! Join us next Sunday for the study, *Drive Thru History: History of the Bible*, as we explore how the Scriptures have been preserved, translated, and passed down through generations.

Christmas Eve Worship Service: Join us for a candlelight service (no Communion) at 7pm at our new property!

Epiphany Sisters of the Light: We are taking a break from meeting during Advent and the Christmas season. Join us at 6pm on Tuesday, January 13 for a discussion of *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver. We will share a light supper, fellowship, prayer, and key takeaways from the book. Plenty of time to start reading! Need a book? Contact Carole at (817) 614-3916.



Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at peacebewithyou.podbean.com (or just scan the QR code).



Lutheran Radio: Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to lhm.org for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBK (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

KFUO Radio, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at kfu.org and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

RightNow Media: Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—**RightNow Media** has a free app that’s available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb or scan the QR code.



ChristianBook Giveback Program: Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit christianbook.com/apps/giveback and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we’ll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

Sunday, December 21st

- 10:00am – Children’s Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion

Wednesday, December 24th

- 7:00pm – Christmas Eve Service – 124 Three Oaks Ln.

Sunday, December 28th

- 10:00am – Children’s Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion

The First Annual Epiphany Lutheran Church Spend the Year in Scripture Challenge reading schedule through next Sunday:

- Day 356 - Mon 12/22: 1 Peter 1-5
- Day 357 - Tue 12/23: 2 Peter 1-3
- Day 358 - Wed 12/24: 1 John 1-5
- Day 359 - Thu 12/25: 2 John 1, 3 John 1, Jude
- Day 360 - Fri 12/26: Revelation 1-3
- Day 361 - Sat 12/27: Revelation 4-8
- Day 362 - Sun 12/28: Revelation 9-11



PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

PRAYER REQUESTS: Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter 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.

Please continue to pray for...

- Deaconess Carol Halter – Missionary in Hong Kong
-

Answers to Sermon Notes:
1. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of **God** did not count equality with **God** a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of **men**. (Philippians 2:5-7)
2. That Jesus was born in the likeness of **men**—sinners like us—makes it easier to craft a **God** who must be like us in more ways than merely a **human** birth.
3. The **birth** of Jesus fulfilled **God’s** promises in a way that bypassed **human** expectations.
4. Only **faith** can see a human **infant** born of a virgin as the **Savior** promised by prophecy.
5. Only through **faith** can we grasp the gravity of **God’s** love for humanity in this baby born for the **Cross** to die so that we may live.
6. When **Joseph** woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a **son** and he called his name **Jesus**. (Matthew 1:24-25)



Why a Virgin Conception?

Each year as Advent draws us closer to the manger, we hear again the words that have shaped Christian faith for two thousand years: “She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18).

And every year—quietly or aloud—someone asks the honest question: Why a virgin conception? Why didn’t God choose a way less open to misunderstanding, gossip, or scandal? Surely the Lord could have avoided the raised eyebrows of Nazareth or Joseph’s initial shock. Surely He could have written a story that looked a little cleaner.

But God never chooses His ways because they look clean. He chooses His ways because they reveal His heart.

First, the virgin conception testifies to *who Jesus truly is—fully God and fully human*. If He had an earthly father, His divine identity could be dismissed. If He appeared only as a heavenly being, His humanity could be denied. But conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary, Jesus is uniquely the God-Man, the One who can stand in our place, bear our sin, and restore us to the Father. The miracle is not biological trivia; it is the declaration that salvation is God’s work from beginning to end.

Second, this birth breaks the long chain of Adam’s inherited sin. Scripture teaches that through one man—Adam—sin and death came into the world. Christ comes as the Second Adam, not to patch up the old humanity but to begin a new one. His conception, untouched by Adam’s guilt, is the dawn of a redeemed creation. It is God turning the page of history and writing a new story in the life of His Son.

Third, the virgin conception fulfills God’s ancient promises. Isaiah foretold that a virgin would conceive. Genesis spoke of a Savior who would be uniquely the “seed of the woman.” God does not abandon His Word, even when its fulfillment invites misunderstanding. The scandal of the story only highlights the faithfulness of the Author.

But perhaps most comforting of all is this: God is not afraid of scandal. From the moment of His conception to the hour of His crucifixion, Jesus walks a path marked by suspicion, misinterpretation, and judgment. The God who saves us is

willing to be misunderstood for our sake. He steps into our world not above its mess but right in the middle of it. The One who would hang on a cross between criminals first enters the world beneath the shadow of whispered rumors. He bears our shame before He ever bears our sins.

And through all of this, God teaches us something essential about faith: His greatest works often come hidden in weakness, humility, and obscurity. The world looks for spectacle; God hides Himself in swaddling clothes. The world demands certainty; God invites trust. The world seeks explanations; God gives promises.

So we kneel again at the manger, not embarrassed by its mystery but strengthened by its mercy. The virgin birth is not a problem to solve but a gift to receive—a sign that God keeps His promises, enters our brokenness, and brings salvation in ways no one expects.

This is the heart of Christmas. God comes near. God comes low. God comes for you.

