

GiFT

GROWING IN FAITH TOGETHER

January GiFT:

Epiphany: A Light Shines Bright

Some have called 'Epiphany' the neglected older sibling of Christmas: It is older than Christmas, dating back to the early 200s AD. However, very few (Western) Christians know much about it, even less how to celebrate it.

The feast day of Epiphany is observed on January 6. It marks the official end of the Christmas season. Yes: the eve of Epiphany is literally 'the 12th day of Christmas'. But Epiphany and Christmas are more closely related by proximity in the calendars. They are like two sides of a coin, looking at the same event from two different perspectives: Christmas takes on the cosmic perspective: Here is God becoming small, the Ruler of our universe taking on flesh in a tiny human being. Epiphany on the other hand takes the perspective of human eyes: it is about people catching a glimpse of God, as they discover that this tiny helpless child in the straw is indeed the Ruler of our universe.

In the West, this feast day is most often associated with the visitation of the magi or wiseman and their bringing of gifts to the Christ child. In the East, it connects to the baptism of Jesus and the first miracle of water being turned into wine. In some cultures, it is known as "women's Christmas," where women enjoy a day of rest after the bustle and hospitality of the Christmas season.

Schedule Change

Beginning in January, GiFT Sundays will include regular worship times at 9:00 AND 11:00, with the Learning Experience at 10:00 (between services)

Some traditions celebrate Epiphany not just as a day, but as a season, all the way leading up to Lent. In this vein, the narrative lectionary will guide us through the season of Epiphany with readings from the Gospel of John that focus on the early life and ministry of Jesus — and people for their first time catching a glimpse of who he really is.

May this season be full of epiphanies for all of us!

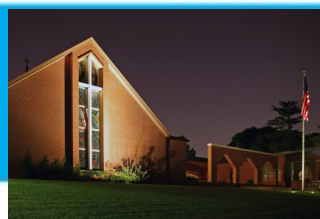


The experience of the magi reminds us that all who make the tedious journey to the truth will finally encounter it and be changed in the process. They can never go back to a 'business as usual' way of life. When we meet Christ and see who he really is, we will never be the same—and only then can we hope to begin to share in his mission."

-- Thomas Rosica

From: "The Tedious Journey to Truth and Joy". Biblical Reflection for January 2, Solemnity of the Epiphany, Year A, December 25, 2010.





Finding our Faith Stories A Small Group Experiment for Lent

*I love to tell the story of unseen
things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his
love.*

*I love to tell the story, because I know
'tis true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else
can do.*

*(A. Katherine Hankey, ca.
1868)*

Presbyterians refer to themselves often as God's 'frozen chosen.' I don't think that's accurate. But maybe this: "We're God's introverted people. And we're kind of shy and polite. But most of what we tend to be as a church ... we're not pushy people. That's not our way, and I don't think we need to pretend to be that. We need to be who we are."

Those words are from Bishop Michael Curry, addressing a group of Episcopal Communicators in April 2016. He might as well have been talking to Presbyterians! Speaking about our personal faith is something that just doesn't come naturally or easily to many people, particularly those who have been raised

and nurtured in a mainline denomination. And yet: it shouldn't just be the province of other sorts of Christianity. Michael Curry again: "We need to be who we are. God's shy people need to share their stories in ways that are authentic to them and that matter."

This is what we would like to invite you to with our Small Group Experiment for Lent "Finding our Faith Stories."*

Goal: With the dual goal of helping people in our church family (1) identify and articulate their own faith stories and (2) grow closer to one another in Christ, the Adult Faith Formation committee is organizing faith

Pr. Thomas. On the last week participants will have the opportunity to share a specific story from their journey of faith.

Weekly Questions:

Week 1: Why do I go to church?

Week 2: Who is God to me? and Who am I to God?

Week 3: Why am I a Christian?

Week 4: What are some of my doubts?

Week 5: What are some of the crises, crossroads or closed doors that have affected my faith?

Week 6: How has Christian community changed or transformed my life?

The Seventh Week:
To prepare for the seventh and final week of these small groups you will write a 200-400 word story about a time when God was real and vital in your life. Optional writing prompts will be provided,

and Pastor Thomas can provide some examples from a book of stories by teenagers and adults that was published by the United Church of Christ. These are not professional writing pieces, but stories from your own heart and life. Also, these are not broad overviews of your whole "spiritual journey," but specific stories that possibly expand on one of the questions from the previous weeks.

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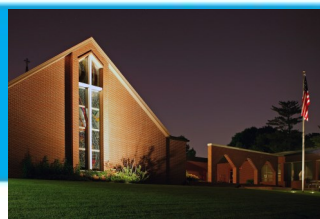


story sharing groups for Lent of 2017. Ideally these weekly small groups will consist of 6-8 adults who meet together for 60-90 minutes weekly for 7 weeks.

What to expect: Each time the group meets in the first six weeks participants will open with a short Bible reflection exercise, spend the bulk of their time telling and listening to each other's experiences based on an assigned question for the week, and close with a short ritual of prayerful worship provided by

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"Sharing faith stories is one of the most meaningful experiences a person can have. Out of our own stories, the stories of our contemporaries and the stories that have been passed on to us – including those written in the Bible- we gain wisdom. From stories we gain wisdom for living." Two aspects of sharing faith stories are equally and differently valuable – both shaping and organizing a "story" out of what might have simply been random impression and sharing your story with others. (*quoted and paraphrased from God in My Life: faith stories & how & why we share them, Maren C Tirabassi & Maria I. Tirabassi, eds, Pilgrim Press: Cleveland, 2008*)

*"Finding our Faith Stories" curriculum developed by Rev. Stephanie Anthony, Pastor at Fox Valley Presbyterian Church in Geneva, Illinois. Permission granted by the author.

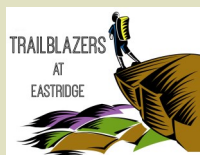


Rev. Melodie and Eastridge

church family: Thank you for all the prayers and assistance you provided at Connie's memorial service. The service message was exactly right for her.

Thanks you again for everything each one did.

Sincerely, John Bennett and family



Trailblazers for January: Join us on January 19 for our annual Game Night & Soup Supper. We'll meet at 6:30 pm, location to be announced (as Huxtable is being remodeled).

Thank you to Kristi Lounsbury for her service as wedding coordinator. Kristi is stepping down after 15 years. We appreciate your service to this ministry!



Committees: Please turn in your annual reports! You may submit via email to: office@eastridge.org. If you'd like to see what was submitted for your committee/group last year, ask in the office. The annual meeting will be Sunday, January 28 following the 9:00 service.

Eastridge Ladies Night Out Tie Dye Night!

Friday, January 26 from 6:30pm – 8:30pm

New Lincoln Tie Dye Studio (Formerly Never Dye Alone)

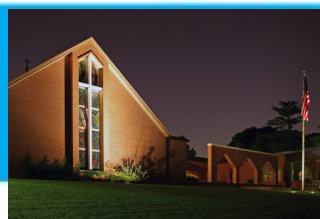
3859 South Street (Park in the rear or in the Dairy Queen Parking Lot)

Cost \$10 for the lesson plus the cost of your item

Let's get together for a class on tie dying! Registration is required for this event. We must have at least 6 people participate. The first 60 minutes will be class time and then we will do a tie dye project at the studio.

Please call 402-805-4031 or check out Shirlette's Facebook invite for more information! When you register, please let me know what size item you want to tie dye so that they can be ready when we arrive.





Confirmation: new class beginning in January

Anyone who is in 8th grade or older that has not been confirmed is welcome to join! Plan to join us for our **parent/student night on Sunday, January 7th, 5 pm.**

Confirmation program at Eastridge lasts for 15 months, with the bulk of the program taking place on Wednesday nights, 6:30-7:30pm. Confirmation for the incoming class is planned for the spring of 2019.

If you are interested in the new confirmation program, or have any questions, please contact Jen Olsen or Pastor Thomas.

There are multiple adults in our church, both staff and members dedicated to our program, who will be working together to make this time an amazing learning experience for confirmation students. Our mission is to provide your child with the information and support they need on this important step of their spiritual journey.

Consider becoming a mentor! Each student will be paired with a confirmation mentor. If you would like to participate in mentoring a confirmand, or would like to know more about what it entails, please get in touch with Pastor Thomas.

♦ Confirmation ♦



Thank you to everyone who joined together to go caroling on the afternoon of Sunday, December 3. In three different groups, 22 carolers were able to visit

18 EPC members and share Christmas carols and holiday joy with them. What a wonderful time we had seeing these folks who sometimes find it difficult to physically attend worship and other church activities. We know our visits brought smiles to their faces and gladness to their hearts and souls.

Patty Niemann
EPC Music Coordinator



The Music Ministry

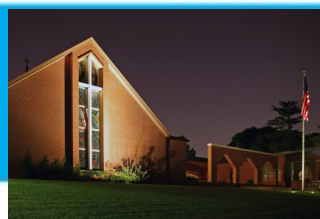
would like to thank everyone who helped assist with the annual **Christmas**

Cantata in December. Without the assistance of greeters, ushers, and many others it wouldn't have been possible to have two musical worship services run so smoothly.

Kirk Ringers will resume rehearsals on Tuesday, January 9th in the music room at 6:30 pm. We always welcome new members. Experience ringing handbells is helpful but not required. The Kirk Ringers ring once a month at the 9:00 am service as well as special services throughout the year. Contact Brian Lew for more information if you are interested in ringing with the bell choir.

Chancel Choir begins rehearsals on Wednesday, January 10th at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary. The Chancel Choir is open to middle schoolers through adults and we always enjoy your faces to the group. Choir sings regularly at 9:00 am worship and sings for special occasions. Contact Brian Lew if you'd like to lift your voice in praise.

A+ Childcare Center is hiring! We are looking for loving individuals to work with all ages both full and part time. Teacher requirements: Ensure the daily care of every child by following licensing guidelines and all company standards. Maintain a fun and interactive classroom that is clean and organized. Have a positive attitude and a love for children Applicants must have: 1) A high school diploma, 2) experience working with young children (coursework in early childhood education is a plus but not required), 3) be 18 years of age or older, and 4) have flexibility and be willing to work in different areas if required. If interested please call Cindy at 531-500-0602.



Session Highlights December 21, 2017

It was moved and approved to accept the items on the Consent Agenda:

Session Minutes for November 16, 2017

Note to Session Members on Annual review

Congregational and Corporation Meeting Minutes for November 5, 2017 (updated)

Special Session Minutes for December 3, 2017

Acknowledge e-mail vote : Should the church purchase an AED (9 yes)

Affirm that communion was served at 9:00 and 11:00 services on December 3, 2017

Acknowledge the baptism of Barrett Randall Eicher, son on Zachary and Ashley Eicher at the 11:00 service on December 3 2017.

Remove Mary "Connie" Bennett from member rolls, deceased Nov. 16, 2017

Acknowledge that Rev. Dr. Melodie Jones Pointon officiated at the memorial service of Connie Bennett on 12-2-17.

Acknowledge new member Brian Lew, joined 12-3-17.

Motions: The following Motions were moved,

seconded (if necessary) and approved:

As brought forth by Memorials and Endowments to accept the gifts on behalf of Connie Bennett \$1,185 and Mark Miller \$275

As brought forth by Worship Commission to serve communion on the first Sunday of each month and Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve.

To hold two worship services at 9:00 and 11:00 on GIFT Sundays in January, February, March and April 2018. A learning experience and meal or refreshments will be planned by the GIFT committee and will take place between the services (generally in the Welcome Center)

A "story" in the life of Eastridge: Each month we'll share some of the responses we received on the cards from our November GiFT:

- "going with the middle school youth to Kansas City and we helped many people and had lots of fun"
- In 1961, "Tom Huxtable trying to teach me the 23rd Psalm. I was having a hard time."

- In 2017, "high schoolers went to Northern Ireland for a mission trip"
- In 2016 (and on), "the wonderful deacons who come every Sunday to pick me up to take me to church. Thank you one and all" ~ Joanna Kennedy

Church Memories

Make plans now to join us for our Intergenerational Mission Trip 2018!

Join us with your family and friends as we travel to provide Hurricane Relief in Florida!

Who: Family and friends of EPC who are 10 years (must be accompanied by parent/guardian) and older. Youth (6th grade-12 grade) who are interested are invited.

Where: We will be based out of First Presbyterian Church of Lakeland, Florida. We will be using some of our connections at FPC Lakeland (yes, that's Pastor Mike Loudon's church!) to connect with parts of Florida that need help.

When: We are looking at dates around July 8-15, 2018. We will fly down and back.

What: We hope to be doing mostly reconstruction work,

but will be doing whatever is most needed!

How much: Current trip projections are \$600/ person. Every participant will be asked to contribute at least \$300, participation in fundraisers will make up the difference.

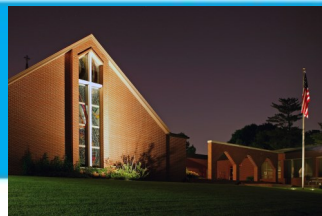
Want to know more? An informational meeting will be held Sunday January 21 at 10:15 in M12 (note meeting date change from original announcement).

How do I secure my spot? A \$50 non-refundable deposit is due January 31, 2018. Space may be limited after that date.

MISSION
TRIP

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MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN

Faith Connection Volunteers needed

After the winter break, our children's programs will gear up again the week of January 7th. If you have some time, we are in need of some additional folks to work with our preschool class and our after school program. During our class time, we have fellowship with the children, teach a lesson and have a craft/activity. If you have interest in helping on Sunday morning or Tuesday afternoon, please contact Kris Adler-Brammer in the church office.

CHILDREN

CHRISTMAS BREAK: Our children and youth programs are currently on Christmas break. Faith Connection for preschool will resume on Sunday, January 7. Faith Connection for Elementary aged children will resume on Tuesday, January 9. Faith Connection for the youth will resume on Wednesday, January 10.



Coming this January - Christ, Culture, and Coffee! All High School students are invited to join this new group! We will meet Sunday afternoons from 5:00-6:00 at the Scooters on 70th and O (near Best Buy) to explore the relationship between faith and life. Begins January 14, 2018. Led by Pastor Melodie and Kara Hilzer.

Thank you to those of you who provided Christmas gifts or donated money towards gifts for the many Angel Tree recipients! Your generosity is appreciated! Thank you to Susan Taylor for coordinating.



Photos from recent Advent events here at Eastridge!



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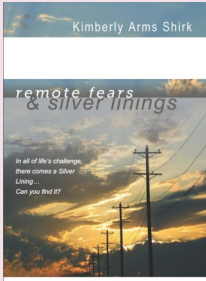
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Bistro Theology

FAITH, DRINKS, DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS

Bistro Theology: Join us the last Monday of the month at The Piedmont Bistro for food, drinks, discussion. Bistro Theology is a gathering space for people of all faith and non-faith backgrounds to come together and respectfully dialogue and question over life, spirituality, culture and society. No agenda, no catch, no debates or shouting matches; a celebration of our community and how we can challenge and learn from each other. Next meeting is January 29!



This January, we're reading *Remote Fears and Silver Linings* by Kimberly Arms Shirk. The author is a former Eastridge member and will be joining us for our discussion! The date for this is January 8.



Only two more people are needed for **The Gathering Place** in January! If you are interested in serving, it is the fourth Monday of each month, and we have an online sign up. Please call the office for more info, or email the office if you'd like to be sent a link!



Winter Weather Policy: If severe winter weather threatens the safety of those attending events here at the church, the decision may be made to cancel those events. If LPS closes, the church will cancel its events for the day, including office hours.

CALLING ALL QUILTERS:

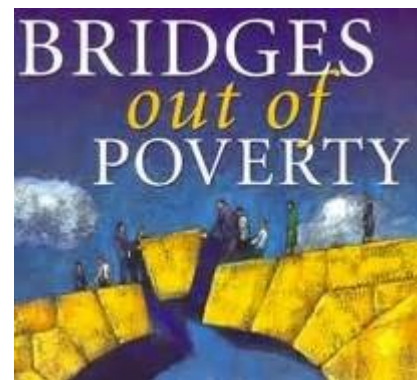
Mark your calendar and save the date for a day of stitching at the 2018 Quilts of Valor National Sew Day to be held at EPC in Roeske Fellowship Hall on Saturday, February 3, 2018 from 9:30 am - 4:00 pm. If you would like more detailed information, contact Judy Lane at judith-blane@yahoo.com or call 402-466-4541.

The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.



Bridges Out of Poverty: Mark this on your calendars!

Come join us Sunday, January 21 for a potluck lunch following the 11:00 church service and an informational presentation from the Food Bank of Lincoln on "BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY" hosted by the Outreach Committee and Food Pantry Board. Potluck at noon followed by a presentation. This workshop is a comprehensive approach to understanding poverty. Bridges Out of Poverty uses the lens of economic class and provides concrete tools and strategies for a community to alleviate poverty. Participants will review poverty research, examine a theory of change, and analyze poverty through the prism of the hidden rules of class, resources, family structure, and language. (This event was rescheduled from last fall).



We welcome Brian Lew as a new member to Eastridge! Brian is transferring from First Parish Church in East Derry, NH. Welcome, Brian!



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