



THE ENLIGHTENER

DECEMBER 2023
JANUARY 2024

Epiphany UCC | St. Louis, Missouri
Benton Park Neighborhood

FROM THE COUNCIL

Dear Epiphany members and community,

As this comes to you, we are days away from the first Sunday of Advent, from the beginning of the church's official season of anticipation. Often, Advent feels like such a blessing. But this year as the worship committee met to plan for the season, the theme that rose up among us was from Isaiah, a prayer begging, demanding that God "tear open the heavens and come down." We are tired of waiting and praying and working, and watching the meanness and divisiveness and violence seems to grow and grow. We hope for some divinely cataclysmic action on God's part. We grow weary in the waiting.

The weariness at Epiphany has shown itself particularly at and since our Nov. 5 congregational meeting. The stress of contemplating when and how to leave our historic building and seek a new place to worship is wearing on us. Conflicting interests around the building are wearing on us. We were not at our best in our last meeting, and we have not always been at our best since then.

(Continued on page 2.)





(Continued from page 1.)

The council met Nov. 21 specifically to think about congregational care at this time. After much discussion, we re-affirmed Epiphany's aspiration to be a radically inclusive community, safe space for all who come to experience God's love incarnate. To that end, we reviewed some ways we think we could do better when we are in difficult meetings.

1. While having an agenda is essential for productive meetings, Epiphany's priority is safe space for dealing with conflict.



2. Maintaining safe space is the work of the whole group, not just the meeting facilitator. Calling for a few deep breaths, a few moments of silence, a time of prayer to give heated emotions time to cool some is the prerogative and responsibility of anyone in the circle who notices the conflict rising to a moment of fragility. Epiphany practices at not being hierarchical, so pretending that only one or two people are responsible for managing conflict is not true to our values.

3. We know it is important to speak in our “I” voices. This is especially true when tensions are rising. Lecturing others or literal/verbal finger-wagging adds to the tension. Speaking in an “I” voice to name my own feelings helps others be honest about their feelings as well. And if we can name our feelings openly it increases the chances that we can talk through the feelings honestly without blow ups.

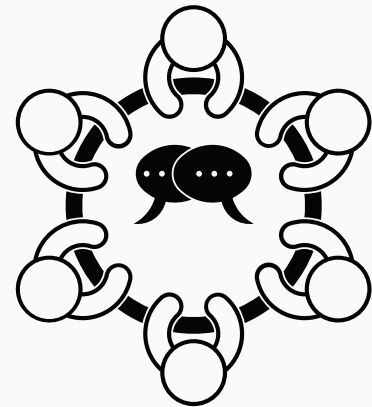
4. During times of conflict, it would be helpful to reflect on whether our choices in interactions are contributing to shared power or contributing to power imbalances. Monopolizing the speaking time is a power play as it means not all voices can be heard. Raising one's voice is a power play because it tends to either intimidate or inflame people. Dropping a verbal bomb and then walking out of the room is a power play as it denies the group a chance to reply, to process, to try to move through the conflict. (Certainly, there can be moments when walking a way for a time feels like the safest way for everyone, but not cooling down and returning to finish the conversation reduces the opportunities for conflict resolution.)

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The council also discussed whether a congregational meeting specifically to discuss how we continue to build and maintain safe space together would be beneficial. We were not certain that calling a meeting to rehash previous meetings would be beneficial, but we are quite willing to call a meeting if the body needs that. We have created a link for you to use –<https://bit.ly/3N4M3z9>—to let us know if you need or want to gather. Please respond either way so we have a better sense of the body at this time.



These options are by no means exhaustive. We hope this letter addresses some of the most recent challenges we have faced together. It is also intended to represent our recommitment keeping Epiphany as safe a space as we can manage. But it can only work if we hold each other accountable to this commitment and lovingly care for each other as we move forward. Until God decides to divinely and cataclysmically heal all of us at once, may we each step up our game to help each other and the Epiphany community grow into who God continually calls us to be. And may our Advent be all the richer as we practice loving each other in the anticipation.

~**The Epiphany Council**

BOILER UPDATE: FULL CIRCLE

Finally, as of this deadline, the boiler appears to be functioning properly after service that included replacing the rusted out tank, the pump that went with the tank, and the pump again after the new replacement one was found faulty. The original tank and pump replacement was billed at \$7500 (Vogel HVAC). We were not charged for replacing the faulty pump (replacing the replacement). We received a \$5,000 donation to help with these expenses. The final startup cost us \$440 more and the plumbing pipe replacement proved unnecessary. One of the pressure gauges was cleaned and reinstalled as part of start up and is operating properly now. The final startup came from ClassicAire which bought Gaines HVAC, the company that installed the current boiler back in 1995. Full circle.



PK's Little Epiphanies



Hello Epiphany Friends,

We have ended another liturgical year with Reign of Christ Sunday on Nov. 26. Happy New Year and welcome to Advent! The name Advent come from a Latin phrase meaning “until the coming.”

The church has traditionally used this time to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of the Christ Child.

There have been several themes for the candles and Sundays of Advent, but in our tradition the most common are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. It is my prayer for each of you that as we light the candles and share in worship shaped around these themes that you will be filled with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love! But, we at Epiphany know all too well that the holidays and winter months are not joyful, hopeful, or even peaceful times for everyone and that love seems to be in short supply these days. If you are struggling, reach out. Even if you don't want to be a burden, reach out. Even if you are “just a little sad,” reach out!!!



Find a friend in the congregation, call or stop by to see the pastor. Call, text, or chat the mental health line at 988. Call the St. Louis Queer+ Support Helpline (SQSH) to chat with a trained LGBTQIA-affirming peer counselor at 314-380-7774.

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The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot put it out - but that doesn't mean we can always see it through our own struggles!

Our Advent devotional theme is a line from Isaiah, "Tear open the heavens and come down!" An appeal to God out of a place of pain and frustration with the world that we know all too well in this time of daily disaster and war; violent political rhetoric (and even actions) in our own country; growing inequality; and rising authoritarianism. I hope that it provides you with the right mix of comfort and challenge to accompany you on your spiritual journey through Advent. We will send out the electronic version as soon as it is completed. Let us know if you need a paper copy and we will get those out as quickly as we can.

Until the coming,

Pastor Krissy Arise-Rouse



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



Advent begins Sunday, Dec. 3. And once again Epiphany will offer up its annual Advent devotional written by members and friends of Epiphany.

The electronic version will be emailed out when it is (soon) completed.

If you need a paper copy, please contact the church.



ARE OUR CHURCHES PLACES OF VERBAL VIOLENCE?



By Larry Gaines

I have been a part of various Christian communities for close to 50 years. Something sort of strange is that in all that time, I've yet to hear any significant discussion of the content of the book of Proverbs.

In some ways I can completely understand this. As I attempt to understand the sayings within the books; I struggle in my efforts to to perceive the sayings as absolutist either/or statements.

BUT there are teachings we vitally need to learn from Proverbs. The following is my thoughts on one message we need to hear/embrace from the sayings within the book.

In our community, I routinely observe behaviors which cause me to feel unsafe. Words have great power both for good or for harm. My understanding is Proverbs wants to teach us that we are/should be accountable for the impact our words have on others.

In our culture, we learn to use words in a way which often will control the safety or behavior of others. I have no concern with the intention which is behind another's words. My concern is the actual impact (poorly chosen words have) to emotionally damage others.

A secular way of expressing my concerns is that our culture teaches us verbal or emotional abuse is an acceptable way to met our own needs. The behaviors we've learned in our culture are brought along with us as we enter our church groups.

The abusive patterns continue until we chose to do the hard work of identifying and changing our unskillful chosen words. If we work to change the use of damaging language, our churches can become havens where words can aid in healing. (Proverbs 16:24)

If some wish to respond to my thoughts, I welcome that if you would do so only in writing. If any are unable to respect this need, I would prefer you not to respond at all.



Saturday Dec. 16th
6:00 PM
Sponsored
by
Indigo Massage & Wellness



indigo
massage &
wellness
indigomassagetherapy.com



\$25

Led by Dianna Lucas and Brennan England
Enjoy the Beautiful Acoustics of
Epiphany UCC Sanctuary
2911 McNair Ave 63118

For a full description or to buy tickets, [click here.](#)



CHRISTMAS LETTER TO EPIPHANY

From John DeClue

First I want to say Merry Christmas to you all. I know it's been awhile since I have written, so I am deeply sorry for that, but I want all of you to know that I am doing well.

I am still doing art, because it allows me to not only use my imagination to create something special, but I am also allowing God to use my skills to create joy in someone's heart. I love putting my talents to use to change someone's life, because it creates beauty in someone's life. I find that I can build more from my heart than just to build something out of wood. I love creating something that will bring smiles, joy, and wonder, because it comes straight from the heart.

I want to say thank you for taking an offering for me for Christmas. I am sorry to hear that we can't keep our church building, but I pray like every one of you pray. I want you all to continue the faith, because just because we have to find another place doesn't mean God did too. God has been with each and every one of us since we asked God to come into our lives. You all have shown me that Christ is not hard to find when it comes to seeking him because he is in each and every one of your hearts.

There has been a lot of passing within our church but they will forever be with us all, no matter how it is. There are so many memories we have had with everyone that's in our little family.

You all have built a new man in me, and it's all because you took your time to love me for who I am. I am loved now for what I do, and that is by accepting Christ as my Lord and Savior, and as our church building comes to some end of a journey, I will never forget how our church wasn't ever big enough for all the love that we had from each other and Christ.

I have given my time to share that same love to the broken one that's still trying to find their selves, and I will never give up on trying to bring the lost to our good shepherd which is our Lord and Savior. It feels so good to know that I am not the only one that is guiding the lost. It's in all of your hearts and I love being a part of your goal, because I know that your love just don't stop at Epiphany.

I know it will carry on to what God has planned for each of us in this world, and I want to be a part of giving unconditional love to everyone that seeks to feel how love feels. I know from the first moment that you all welcomed me in your lives. There was something very special coming to be a part of my life. You all are my gift from heaven, and I will hold all of you near to my heart for the rest of my life here on earth and whatever comes after that.

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You all have allowed God to use each and every one of you as my mustard seed, because you all have given me faith that there is something wonderful after life here on earth is done. You all have given me a reason to be thankful this Thanksgiving. I might be in a bad position, and there's a chance I will be in prison for the rest of my life, but it will never be home. Being with each and every one of you and with God is forever my home. It took some praying and faith to make me realize that as long as I have Christ and all of your prayers, I have life, I have freedom and a place to be. I can join my family in praising God for the joy you all have given me by just seeing you all smiling and enjoying my company because I have always enjoyed yours.

So if the building has to go, I want you all to know that God isn't the building The church is each and every one of God's children. So, we might not have the building but we will always have God in our lives. As long as we continue to allow Christ to give us love for others, we will always be loved by Christ.

And for me that will always be my Christmas gift from Christ. I know you all have always felt that way too, because by you accepting me from the first time I walked into Epiphany, I knew God's presence was within the church of Christ.

I will always allow Christ to guide me to whatever he has in store for me, and I will do his will. I know how it feels to lose something special, and I can say that I refuse to lose you all out of my life. So, if and when God calls us home, I know you all will leave so much love and great memories behind that I will enjoy sharing with the ones that are my brothers and sisters in Christ. That's even the broken ones, because God loves them too.

So, I want to thank you all for the Christmas gift, and for praying for me. But I really want to thank you for showing me the meaning of love, because it affects me mentally to know that I am thought of, and to know I am remembered melts my heart into a place where God can live forever. I will continue to inspire the ones that are confused about life after death. because they might be loved by others here, but they have never felt love like we have in God's eyes. I pray that I could do the same thing for them that you all have done for me. That is to not only be loved, but to really feel it because no one knows the feeling of love until you soak in it. God created love because he is love.

Well, I best end this because I am about to run out of room. So, I want to say that I have each and every one of you in my thoughts and prayers. I want to say thank you and Merry Christmas, to all of you. God Bless you my Epiphany family, and have a safe and Happy New Years.

Peace and Love,

John DeClue



SAVE THE DATE: FEB. 24 HOME REMEDY CONCERT

Back by popular demand: Home Remedy! Mark your calendars now, because you won't want to miss Cindy Minnis and Melinda Monroe perform on Saturday, Feb. 24 from 5:30-7 p.m.



CENTERING PRAYER: ALL ARE INVITED!



If you've never come to Epiphany's centering prayer, consider trying it out.

Currently, we're having centering prayer on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 5:30 p.m.

Each session begins with a short reading or poem to settle our minds. Then, 20 minutes of silence for prayer. After that, participants are free to take a minute or two to share verbal prayers.

Upcoming centering prayers: Dec. 6 and 20; Jan. 3 and 17.



QUESTIONING COMMANDS—EVEN GOD’S

A midrash is a teaching to explain or amplify Torah. I love this one by a Quaker woman, Marion McNaughton, on Genesis 22, the sacrifice of Isaac. Always question a wrong command, even if you think it's coming from god. -Jeane Vogel

And with a heavy heart Abraham went to his wife Sarah and said, "God has told me to take our son Isaac, whom we love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering."

And Sarah said, "A shrewd move. This God is no fool. This is Her way of testing you. What did you say to Her?"

And Abraham replied, "I said nothing. I want God to know I will obey Him without question. I will do as He commands."

And Sarah threw up her hands in despair and said, "Abraham, you are a bone-headed fool. What kind of a God do you think you are dealing with? What kind of a God would want you to kill your own son to prove how religious you are? Don't be so stupid! She's trying to teach you something; that you must challenge even the highest authority on questions of right and wrong. Argue with Her, wrestle with Her!" But Sarah's words smacked to Abraham of blasphemy, and he went into the mountains with his son Isaac.

And Sarah said to God, "You are playing with fire. He is too stupid to understand what you are up to. He won't listen to me and he won't challenge you; if you don't stop him, he will kill our precious son. Is that what you want?"



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And God said, "Sarah, they have a long journey to the mountains; I'm hoping one of them will see sense."

And Sarah said, "Like father like son. You'll have to send an angel."

And it came to pass as Sarah foretold, and the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham the first time and told him not to kill his son. And Abraham sacrificed a ram as a burnt offering. And the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham a second time and told him his offspring would be as numerous as stars in the heaven and would possess the gates of their enemies. And the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham a third time and said, "Because you were ready to kill your own son in the name of your God you will be known as a great patriarch and millions will follow your example. And they will believe that He is indeed a jealous and a demanding God, and they will willingly sacrifice their sons in His name and to His glory. And there will be bloodshed and slaughter in all the corners of the earth."

And Abraham returned to his wife Sarah and said, "God is well pleased with me for I am to be a mighty patriarch."

And Sarah said nothing. But she took the garments of Abraham and Isaac that were stained with the blood of the ram, and she carried them to the river to be washed. And the river ran red with the blood of generations to come, and Sarah wept bitterly.

And God came to Sarah at the water's edge and said, "Sarah, do not weep. You were right. It will take time. Meanwhile hold firm to what you know of me and speak it boldly. I am as you know me to be. Many generations will pass and a new understanding will come to the children of Abraham, but before then I shall be misheard and misrepresented except by a few. You must keep my truth alive."

And Sarah dried her eyes and said, "As if I didn't have enough to do!"





Holiday Party

Celebrate the season of joy by eating,
dancing, and singing with us!

TUES, DEC 19TH | EDEN THEOLOGICAL
5:30-8:30 PM | SEMINARY
475 E LOCKWOOD AVE

Register: bit.ly/MCUHoliday23



FREE ATTENDANCE FOR ALL MCU FRIENDS AND FAMILY
FOOD & BEVERAGES WILL BE PROVIDED



LECTIONARY READINGS FOR DECEMBER 2023

You can deepen your experience of worship by reading the scriptures in advance of Sunday. Worship services are often (but not always) based on one of the lessons of the week.

December 3

Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

December 17

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 31

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 21:22-40

Sundays Worship & Education

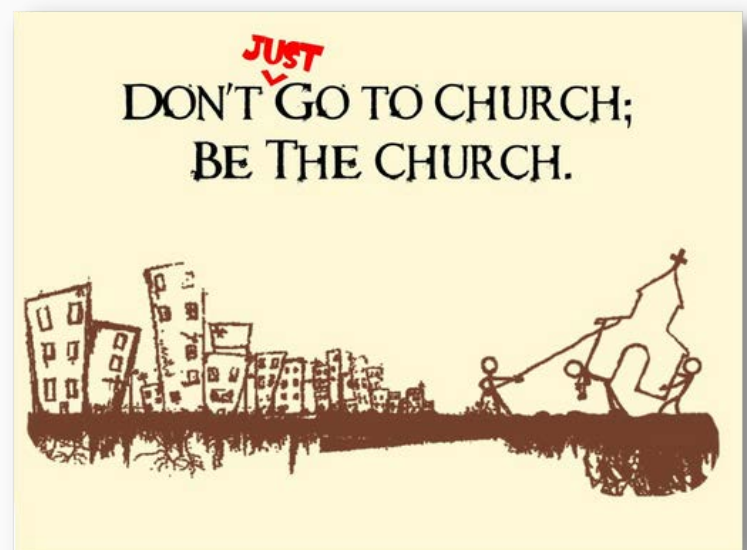
Adult Education, 9:15 a.m.

Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Click the link to Zoom with us,
or worship with us at
facebook.com/epiphanyucc.



NOISY OFFERING - 3RD SUNDAYS



DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-	-	-	-	-	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

You may contact Pastor Krissy at pastorkris@epiphanyucc.org for an invitation to the Zoom worship and meetings.

- December 1 - Friday:** World AIDS Day
- December 2 - Saturday**
- December 3 - First Sunday of Advent**
9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion
10:30 a.m. Worship with Communion
- December 4 - Monday**
- December 5 - Tuesday**
No Benton Park meeting in December
- December 6 - Wednesday**
6 p.m. Centering Prayer Group
- December 7 - Thursday**
- December 8 - Friday:** Hanukkah begins
- December 9 - Saturday**
- December 10 - Second Sunday of Advent**
9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion
10:30 a.m. Worship
- December 11 - Monday**
- December 12 - Tuesday**
- December 13 - Wednesday**
- December 14 - Thursday**
- December 15 - Friday:** Hanukkah ends
- December 16 - Saturday**

- December 17 - Third Sunday of Advent**
with **NOISY OFFERING**
9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion
10:30 a.m. Worship with Communion
- December 18 - Monday**
- December 19 - Tuesday**
- December 20 - Wednesday**
6 p.m. Centering Prayer Group
- December 21 - Thursday**
7 P.M. COUNCIL
- December 22 - Friday**
- December 23 - Saturday**
- December 24 - Fourth Sunday of Advent**
9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion
10:30 a.m. Worship
- December 25 - Monday: Merry Christmas**
- December 26 - Tuesday:** Kwanzaa begins
- December 27 - Wednesday**
- December 28 - Thursday**
- December 29 - Friday**
- December 30 - Saturday**
- December 31 - Sunday: New Year's Eve**
9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion
10:30 a.m. Worship



Remember, the **newsletter** is only as good as the items that are submitted to the editors. We're always looking for new and interesting content. If you have anything to share (news, ideas, musings), send to [Wes](#).

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR January 2024

You can deepen your experience of worship by reading the scriptures in advance of Sunday. Worship services are often (but not always) based on one of the lessons of the week.

January 7

Genesis 1:1-5 | Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7 | Mark 1:4-11

January 14

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12 -20 | John 1:43-51

January 21

Jonah 3:1-5, 10 | Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31 | Mark 1:14-20
Deuteronomy 18:15-20

January 28

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 | Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13 | Mark 1:21-28

 Whoever you are

And wherever
you are on life's
journey

You are
welcome here

No
Exceptions 



DON'T GO
TO CHURCH

BE THE CHURCH



JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
-	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	-	-	-

You may contact Pastor Krissy at pastorkris@epiphanyucc.org for an invitation to the Zoom worship and meetings.

January 1 - Monday: New Year's Day

January 2 - Tuesday

No Benton Park meeting in January

January 3 - Wednesday

6 p.m. Centering Prayer Group

January 4 - Thursday

January 5 - Friday

January 6 - Saturday: Epiphany

January 7 - Sunday

9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion

10:30 a.m. Worship with Communion

January 8 - Monday

January 9 - Tuesday

January 10 - Wednesday

January 11 - Thursday

January 12 - Friday

January 13 - Saturday

January 14 - Sunday

9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion

10:30 a.m. Worship

January 15 - Monday:

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 16 - Tuesday

January 17 - Wednesday

6 p.m. Centering Prayer Group

January 18 - Thursday: Week of Prayer for

Christian Unity begins (18th - 25th)

7 p.m. Church Council on Zoom

January 19 - Friday

January 20 - Saturday

January 21 - Sunday with NOISY OFFERING

9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion

10:30 a.m. Worship with Communion

January 22 - Monday

January 23 - Tuesday

January 24 - Wednesday

January 25 - Thursday

January 26 - Friday

January 27 - Saturday

January 28 - Sunday

9:15 a.m. Adult Discussion

10:30 a.m. Worship

January 29 - Monday

January 30 - Tuesday

January 31 - Wednesday



STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

	Actual YTD (June-Oct)	Budget FY24
Total Income:	\$ 53,635	\$ 80,950
Total Expenses:	\$ 42,452	\$ 107,188
Net Income:	\$ 11,183	\$ -26,238

Additional information is available from the Treasurer



MEMORIALS/THANK YOUS

A big thank you to those who purchased poinsettias as memorials to loved ones:

Karen and Dwaine Sell - **In memory of Lloyd and Lucille Sell and Roy and Ruth Dressel**

Dorothy Gannon and J-MO - **In memory of Marie and Raymond Oxford and Mildred and Charles Gannon**

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES



December Birthdays

Vernon Kays 12/11
Beckie Tilinski 12/20
Krissey Avise-Rouse 12/26

December Anniversaries

None

January Birthdays

Rev. Michael Vosler 1/28

January Anniversary

Lauren Verseman & Todd Richardson 1/3

Fred Hudson- **In memory of John L. Scott, Duan M. Walker, Gloria L. Walker, William D. & Shirley M. Scott. And in honor of Timothy H. Hudson, Kathy Scott & Margaret Bley, Sean & Aubrey Scott Family, Ames and Cassi Blackwood Family**



**Members
who cannot
be with us
but would
love to hear
from you!**

John DeClue #529925
C/O Digital Mail Center-Missouri DOC
PO Box 25678, Tampa FL. 33622-5678

David Hon
2005 Frenken St.
Pocahontas, AR 72455

Chris Heckendorn
Garden Villa South, Apt. 130
13457 Tesson Ferry Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63128
Front desk phone: 314-843-7788
Chris welcomes visitors, please
call first.

Ministers at Epiphany

Pastor, Rev. Kristofer Avise-Rouse
President, Lois Yatzeck
Vice President, Karen Sell
Secretary, Amanda Verbeck
Treasurer, Kat Logan Smith
Council Member: Dorothy Gannon
Financial Secretary, Dorothy Gannon
Accounts Payable, Jeanette Mott Oxford

Building Care, Kat Logan Smith
Choir, Dorothy Gannon
Christian Education Chair, Lois Yatzeck
Enlightener Editor, Wes Buchek
Hospitality and Usher Coordinator,
Wes Buchek

Our Purpose: We love God by: Accepting and affirming all, fostering growth, and working for social justice.

Our Commitments:

We are "Open and Affirming"—welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities into church life and leadership.

We are a "Just Peace" Church—seeking to bring peace by working for social justice.

We are a "Whole Earth" Church—committed to caring for creation and bringing a 'green' consciousness to our living.

We seek to become a "Multicultural" Church—celebrating the diversity of racial and ethnic traditions.

WE SEEK TO BE MULTI-CULTURAL AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Sunday Schedule

9:15 a.m.

Christian Education

10:30 a.m.

Worship

Telephone:

314-772-0263

Email:

pastorkris@epiphanyucc.org

Website:

www.epiphanyucc.org

