

Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church
1400 Horsepen Road
Monument Ave. at Horsepen Road
Richmond, VA 23226
Phone: 804-282-6066
Fax: 804-282-6067
www.epiphanyelca.org

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage Pd.
Richmond, VA
Permit # 711



a congregation of the ELCA

Worship Times
Sunday 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.
(May 24-September 6,
8:30 and 10:30am)
Wednesday Healing/Holy
Communion 11:00 a.m.



www.facebook.com/EpiphanyLutheranRVA

Follow us on Twitter! @EpiphanyELCA

From The Archives

August 1962 - Mrs. Warren Smith and Mrs. Adolph Platz served on the synod ULCW executive board.

Audio recordings of sermons can be located on our website from our main page “For sermons, click here”. Links to the pastors’ sermon blogs may also be found there.



The Examiner

The Newsletter of Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Richmond, VA

August 2015

Introducing...Epiphany’s Welcome Desk!

Over the summer some of you may have noticed a new addition to our Commons, the Welcome Desk, an idea conceived and designed by our Evangelism Team. Over the course of the summer volunteers have experimented with different ways of using the Welcome Desk along with different locations for it, trying to ascertain where it may best serve its purpose (it has wheels!). The feedback we’ve received about it so far has been nearly unanimous: people are glad it’s here!



What is the purpose of the Welcome Desk? It really has three different functions rolled into one:

- To serve as a clear, recognizable spot where members and guests alike can find a friendly face on Sunday morning.** Granted, on any given Sunday one is surrounded by numerous friendly, knowledgeable faces. However, sometimes the Commons can feel a lot like a high school hallway. One Evangelism Team member shared that for a long time her family always felt comfortable and welcome in the sanctuary, but as soon as they stepped into the Commons they felt intimidated! The Evangelism Team hopes the presence of an identifiable greeting point will help with basic hospitality.
- To greet newcomers (and members!) and answer their questions.** One volunteer, John Hartmann, has compiled a notebook containing all the ministries of the congregation and a contact person or staff liaison for each one. This resource will be housed at the Welcome Desk and updated on a regular basis. Many people looking for a church home want to know if a congregation has a particular ministry available. Many long-time members may want to know the same information! It is hoped the Welcome Desk will at least increase our accessibility in this regard.
- To centralize our innumerable sign-up sheets.** Busy congregation = lots of sign-up sheets. It will not be possible to locate all of our ministries’ sign-up sheets at the Welcome Desk at this time, but the volunteer behind the desk can at least direct people to where other information and sign-up sheets are. For example, if someone is wondering where to sign up to serve at LAMB’S Basket or how to make reservations for the next congregational meal, the Welcome Desk would be a good place for them to go.

At this point, the Evangelism Team is looking for volunteers from the congregation who can work the desk in this new ministry of hospitality. Volunteers do not need to be experts on the congregation’s ministries or membership and will receive a short orientation on what to do. All we need are people who can smile and reach out with kindness to people who are curious about Epiphany and to people who may already know us but who are curious about how they may get further involved. The desk was even designed with a small side-desk where a young child can volunteer. Interested? Great! Guess where you’ll find the sign-up sheet for this!

We owe a special thanks to the builder of the desk, Bob Van Divender, and Charlotte Ulrich and John Hartmann for getting it running.

Yours in Christ’s service,

Phillip Martin

Long Range Planning Team

In April a group of 14 members of the congregation and paid staff got together to hold the first Long Range Planning Team meeting. Council had created the team and asked them to: draft a mission statement, design a logo and recommend objectives, goals and a long-range plan for Epiphany. The team was asked to have these items completed within 6 to 9 months.

In the beginning, the team completed bible studies to understand God’s will for the church. Primarily the group focused on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), but also examined 16 other verses of scripture (examples include: Romans 12:4-6, Ephesians 5:23, Acts 5:42, Acts 2:44-47, Mark 10:43-45). Then, the team got to work!

Mission Statement and Logo: The team reviewed and researched 14 other churches’ logos and mission statements as a starting point. We decided that Epiphany’s logo and mission statement would: be easy to remember, would play off of each other, and would likely involve a theme of ‘being on a journey’ (as it relates to the Epiphany story of the wise men).

Long-Range Plan: The team has begun shaping the Long-Range Plan according to the 5 areas of the life of the congregation, as set-out by our constitution: Evangelism, Faith Formation, Service, Stewardship and Worship. Each of these areas will have an objective which will paint a picture of what we feel success in each area would look like in 5 to 10 years, along with recommended goals and action items on how the Congregation can get there.

The members of the team welcome any input and feedback that you may have.

Thank you.

- Brendan Paget, Caroline Wake, Caryn Palmgren, Cathy DeLesDenier
- Christy Huffman, Jeremy Schenk, Pastor Joseph Bolick
- Katie Nelson, Kevin Barger, Pastor Phillip Martin
- Richard Ashpole, Rob McClintock, Pastor Tom Bosserman



Members in Our Prayers

During illness or recuperation ~

For those serving in the Armed Forces ~

Please continue to keep all those serving our country to keep us safe and free, in your prayers.

Family and Friends in our Prayers

For the families and friends of those who died ~

Rest eternal grant them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them ~



Epiphany Lutheran Nursery School

Hello from the Nursery School! I hope is enjoying their summer. The nursery school had a successful two weeks of camp in late May and early June and we enjoyed our “Backyard Beach” week and “Under the Sea” theme.

As we get closer to the school year many of you may be thinking about sending your little ones to preschool for the first time. We do still have a few openings in most of our classrooms. Please feel free to contact me via email or phone to talk about ELNS or to schedule a tour. I also have summer office hours ever Wednesday from 9 am to 12 pm for you to drop in without a prescheduled appointment. You can also get a lot of great information about our program at www.epiphanylutherannurseryschool.com. If your children have already graced the hallways of ELNS or you would like to support the school in other ways, we are now an eligible organization on the AmazonSmile website. If you shop through Amazon, you can also shop through www.amazon.com and chose an organization that will benefit from your purchases. Epiphany Lutheran Nursery School is now listed as one of those organizations. Once you chose us once, we should be your default organization anytime you go back to amazon.com to shop. We will receive a percentage of any qualifying sale you make from their website. We are also still participating in the Martin’s A+ program. If you shop at Martin’s, you can register your card with our school and we will receive a donation near the end of the school year based on how much shopping was one with Martin’s cards that have our school designated. This year we earned almost \$200! Every little bit helps and we thank you!! You can either register on the Martin’s site or send your Martin’s card number to me and I can register for you. We also wanted to let you know that our email address has changed. You can now email the school at elnsdirector@gmail.com. We are still checking the old email account but have been having trouble sending and receiving emails with that email address, so going forward we ask that you use this new email address to get in touch with the school office. You can always reach us by phone as well at 282-7506.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hendricks, Director ELNS

Notes to Know

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL
President—Jim Yucha ‘16
Vice President— Stephanie Paget ‘17
Secretary—Matt Greenshields ‘17
Treasurer—Georgianna Hahn ‘16

Council Members
Jim Johnson ‘16
Carole Alfriend ‘16
Joe Potter ‘17
Ramona Schaeffer ‘18
Lyle Gleason ‘18
Amy Boyle ‘18



OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday 9 am-3:30 pm
Friday - 9 am—Noon



CHURCH STAFF

Pastor – The Rev. Phillip W. Martin, Jr., pastorphillip@epiphanyelca.org
Pastor – The Rev. Joseph L. Bolick, pastorjoseph@epiphanyelca.org
Diaconal Minister – Christine V. Huffman, cvanolinda@epiphanyelca.org
Visitation Pastor – The Rev. Tom Bosserman, pastortom@epiphanyelca.org
Director of Music Ministry – Kevin Barger, kevinbarger@epiphanyelca.org
Administrative Assistant – Hanne Hamlin, churchoffice@epiphanyelca.org
Coordinator of Volunteers – Beth Barger, bethbarger@epiphanyelca.org
Youth Ministry Assistant – Mark Schuetze, markschuetze@epiphanyelca.org

Music Ministry

NOTES FROM THE CHOIR LOFT
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY, KEVIN BARGER

Seeking Sound Team Members

We need more people to assist in keeping our sound on track during worship! Some of our volunteers would like to have a break, and some have graduated and moved away! This is a very easy ministry opportunity. Those who might like to serve in this capacity are asked to contact Kevin at 746-5756 or kevinbarger@epiphanyelca.org.



Mark your calendars now for rehearsals!

While we are all vacationing, it is hard to believe that our return to rehearse and fellowship together will be here soon. If you have been thinking about joining any of our ensembles, here is your opportunity to give it a go! Don’t assume that there is no room for you or that others will do it. Come join us! More details on groups will be provided next month.

Here are some starting dates for returning groups so you can mark your calendars now:

- Chancel Choir (11:00) – Wednesday, September 9 – 7:15 p.m.
- Chancel Choir (8:30) – Sunday, September 13 – 8:00 a.m.
- Epiphany Ringers – Sunday, September 13 – 10:00 a.m.
- Singing Saints – Wednesday, September 16 – 6:30 p.m.
- Cherub Choir – Wednesday, September 16 – 6:30 p.m.
- Junior Handbells – Wednesday, September 16 – 7:00 p.m.

Instrumentalists

Given the movement (graduating, moving away, needing a break, etc) of several of our members, we like to refresh our listing of those instrumentalists that we have who are willing to share their talents. If you play an instrument of any kind and are willing to share your talent in worship, please email Kevin at kevinbarger@epiphanyelca.org. This will help us make sure we include the greatest number of folks!

Epiphany Brass

Brass will be playing in worship on Reformation Sunday, October 25. Please let Kevin know at kevinbarger@epiphanyelca.org if you are available and willing to participate!

Summer Faith Formation

Summer Bible Adventure



Join us this August from 9:45 am—10:15 am on Sunday mornings in Price Hall as we hear about each Sunday’s scripture readings from worship. Each week we will gather to hear a story, discuss what it means to us today, and share in an activity.

We need leaders to share the story and engage the kids in an activity to remember the story. The stories in August following along with the themes of the Bread of Life and from the letter to the church in Ephesus. Materials will be provided for each leader.

Please contact Christy Huffman at deaonchristy@comcast.net or sign up in the Commons, if you are willing to serve. We look forward to seeing you there.

Backpack & Briefcase Blessing

Sunday, September 6, 2015



The start of school is just around the corner! Shopping for school supplies, books, and fall clothes becomes a part of everyone’s schedule. Make plans to join us on Sunday, September 6, as we celebrate and bless the beginning of another school year and fall schedule.

We invite everyone, students and adults alike, to bring their backpacks, laptop bags, lunch boxes or briefcases to worship either at 8:30 or 10:30 am. We will celebrate and honor all who will return to school or the fall work schedule.

Rally Day—Sunday, September 13, 2015!!

All of our Sunday school classes will kick out with a Celebration in the Sanctuary at 9:45 am. It will be an exciting time to meet our new teachers and catch up with friends. After the 11:00 service we will have our Annual Congregation Picnic. We hope everyone will join in on the fun.

Stewardship

Why Simply Giving?

The Simply Giving program is a way you can make your contributions to Epiphany easier, faster, and, with less stress. The money is deducted from either your checking or savings account as often as you designate, and in the amount you wish. In order to get started, you will need a form, available in the church office, which requires such information as name, address, frequency of donation, and amount. You will also have to submit the date you want to start, and your envelope number. You will also be asked to attach a blank check or savings account slip to the form. Each month, your financial institution will notify you of your deposit. Some of our members have expressed a feeling of discomfort, as the offering plate is passed, and they have nothing to put in it. At the same time, those with young children, feel they need to set an example for those children, who see their parents place something in the plate. To accommodate both issues, there is now a blue pew card in the pew rack, for either purpose. On the back side of the card is a request for more information on the Simply Giving program. For further information on this program, please contact any member of the Stewardship committee, or Bruce Garringer, Financial Secretary.

Dear Pastor Phillip,

I was just looking at my list of congregations who have supported the ELCA Malaria Campaign – and I thought you might be interested to know that Epiphany is in the top 100 of all ELCA congregations! (Number 87, to be exact—you have already given more than \$8,500!)

Please do extend our gratitude to Epiphany Lutheran Church for their extravagant generosity to the ELCA Malaria Campaign. I think it’s something to be proud of that your church family is among the most generous congregations in the whole ELCA when it comes to malaria! I hope Epiphany will consider joining us in a “final push” for the ELCA Malaria Campaign this summer.

Here’s the link to the new “Malaria Moment” video for your reference: <http://bit.ly/1JZRaeD>. The video celebrates the generosity of the ELCA so far, and encourages us to raise the final \$500,000 to complete our goal of \$15 million. (Actually, as of this morning, there’s less than \$400,000 left to go!)

Please let me know if I can help in any way. I’m also happy to direct you to our other great resources.

With gratitude,
Jessica Nipp Hacker
ELCA Diaconal Minister
Director, Donor Relations and Donor Stewardship

www.Team2017.org

Virginia Synod
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

In the last three years,
we’ve cut child mortality
from malaria in half!

Mosquito nets save lives.
Only \$10 buys a net. Please
donate to help families
through their churches.

Fellowship Ministry

30/40 Somethings' End of Summer Picnic

Join us at the home of Jon and Karen Gonzales
On Sunday afternoon, August 30; 1pm

Please bring a dessert or side dish to share.
BBQ & buns, Chicken Nuggets, and drinks will be provided.

Please sign up at the Welcome Desk in the Commons
where more details and an address are available.



Second Sunday Sundaes

Join us in Price Hall following the 10:30 am service on the second Sunday this summer for a cool treat and some time for fellowship. All items will be nut-free.

No need to sign up. Just mark your calendar for August 9 and plan to join us.



Summertime Donuts

Please sign up in the Commons to bring 4 dozen donuts and 50 donut holes from the donut shop of your choice on a Sunday and put them in Price Hall.

Save your receipts and give them to Beth Barger
if you'd like to be reimbursed.

Questions?

Contact Beth at 282.6066 (church) or 839.2398 (cell)



Summer Faith Formation

Vacation Bible School—Camp Discovery



We had a wonderful week at Camp Discovery in July. Each day 80 volunteers helped our 117 participants learn how Jesus is at work through us. The volunteers modeled for us our theme verse “We love because God first loved us.”

A special thank you for all our volunteers, our adults and youth, who spent hours preparing and leading our cabins on their adventure. Our Camp Directors, Kristy Anderson, Jennifer Baker and Sarah Bergh started planning

back in February and all their hard work paid off with a fantastic week. We are so grateful for the members of our congregation and community who return each year and take time off from work, to make this a fun and exciting week as we learn more about God’s great story with us.

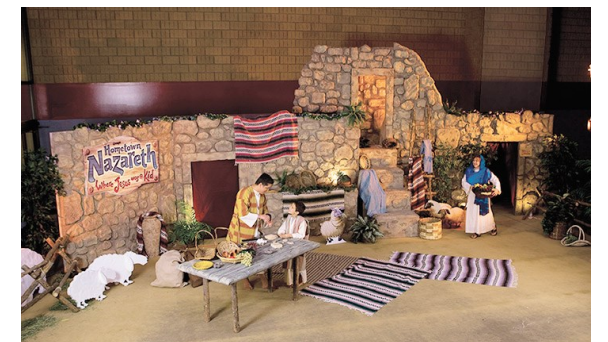
Mark your calendars now for next year’s daytime Vacation Bible School:

Surf Shack: Catch the Wave of God’s Amazing Love, July 18-22, 2016.

Our First Everybody Vacation Bible School—Hometown Nazareth

August 2-6, 2015, 5:30-7:30 pm with dinner included

We are excited for this new experience to start Sunday, August 2 as we gather with “Tribes” to hear the stories from Mary and travel through the Marketplace in Nazareth. ***Our registration is closed***, but there may still be room for you to join us. Please contact Christy Huffman, at deaconchristy@comcast.net for availability.



There is a \$25 registration fee per family, which is due by August 2.

We need your help to transform our building into Nazareth as it was in Jesus’ time. Do you have a canopy/tent we could borrow to transform the Commons into a marketplace? Do you have throw rugs, large throw pillows, plastic plants, or baskets we could use in the marketplace or sanctuary? If you have any items we could borrow to build Nazareth, please drop off at church by Friday, July 31.

Faith Formation

Children and Youth Sunday Morning Faith Formation

At Epiphany, our Sunday morning Faith Formation program runs smoothly with Teaching Teams for each class (Age 2—High School). A Teaching Team is made up of four persons, two lead teachers and two helpers. This arrangement allows volunteers to serve with flexibility and does not require them to be here every Sunday. Each teaching team works out their own schedule as to who teaches/helps when. Each week there are always at least two adults in each class. There are also “behind the scenes” jobs that assist with the flow of Sunday Morning Faith Formation.



Sunday School begins at 9:45 am September 13, 2015 and runs through May 22, 2016. Our youngest ages

(age 2 through 4th Grade) use either the *Spark: Activate Faith* or *Whirl* Lectionary-based curricula. This means the lessons match the stories heard in worship on Sunday mornings. Our middle schoolers and high schoolers use a variety of curricula from *Connect*, *re:form Ancestors* and *Faith Lens*.

How Can I Serve? You can sign up to help in the Commons or online on the church website under “forms.”

Lead Teacher—Responsible for planning and teaching lessons. A specific curriculum is used in each class, and the teachers help make sure that the goals and objectives for each age group are met. See the bulletin board in the Commons for a detailed position description.

Helper— Acts as an assistant to the lead teacher by helping children participate, assisting with parts of the lesson, and gathering supplies as needed.

Sunday School Superintendents— Responsible for distributing and collecting attendance folders and offering, and inputting attendance data into our database. Assist teachers/helpers by answering questions concerning photocopying, where to find supplies and other resources. Unlocking and locking the Christian Education Wing, when the Diaconal Minister is away.

Supply Closet Coordinator— Responsible for making sure there are enough supplies in our Supply Closet for the classes to use for crafts and other projects and for keeping the closet neat.

Substitute— is called to serve when a regular teaching team member is absent.

Is training offered?

There will be training for our volunteers on the following dates: Sunday, August 16, 23, or 30 at 9:30 am in the Upper Room. Other training will be scheduled as needed.

If I have questions, who do I contact?

Contact Christy Huffman at 282-6066 or deaconchristy@comcast.net

Ministers Wanted

MINISTERS WANTED:

Contact Beth Barger at 282.6066 or bethbarger@epiphanyelca.org for any of the ministries listed below or for information about additional areas in the life of Epiphany Church.

HHOPE Shopping Assistants

Time Commitment: 2hours/trip 1 trip/month for 1 year

HHOPE is looking for someone to help our Food Bank shopper on Monday mornings. We end up putting so much in the cart that a second person is needed to help gather, load and unload the boxes.

We already have two people who are helping on the second and fourth Mondays. Would you be willing and available to help on either the first, third, or fifth Monday of every month?

Meet at the church at 9:45am.

Ride over to CVFB together.

Load car with food.

Unload once you get back to the church and finish up around 12noon.

You may not be needed every time, and we can switch things around if something comes up with your schedule. Of course, if you'd like to go more than once a month, we can look into that, too. :)

Contact Beth Barger if you are interested.

LAMB's Basket Food Pantry

Time Commitment: 3.5hours/day

Epiphany sends volunteers each month to the Community Food Pantry to help distribute food (Fridays) and stock the shelves (Wednesdays). To volunteer, contact Beth or sign up at the Welcome Desk. For additional information, call the pantry at 565.8007. Inclement weather? Check channel 8 for closings, or if Henrico schools are closed, then LAMB's Basket is closed.

Epiphany's Upcoming Dates:

Wednesday, August 5; 9:30 am—1 pm

Friday, August 21; 9:30 am—1 pm

Extra help may be needed on Tuesday, August 11 which is a distribution day.

Directions from Epiphany to 8419 Oakview Ave:

Take Glenside Dr. North

Turn LEFT onto Staples Mill Rd

Turn RIGHT onto Hermitage Rd

Turn LEFT onto Oakview Ave.

Turn RIGHT onto Second Ave.

Building on the RIGHT on the corner. Enter through rear door

WELCA Circles Meet

Clara Sullivan Circle, Margaret Miller Circle and The Heidi Michaelson Circle will begin their regular monthly meetings again in September. Enjoy the Summer!

The first meeting of the **Clara Sullivan Circle meeting** for the new season will be held on September 9 at 10 am. Martha Boyer and Sophie Wilson are co-hosting at Martha's home. Sophie will do the devotions. We look forward to having all of you attend. Please call Leanne Spletzer (254-2849) with questions of if you need a ride.

The Coordinating Council will meet on Monday September 17 at 2 pm in the Parlor. Please let Leanne know if you cannot attend.



Community Service Ministry

Ramp Project

For the past month or so, a number of Epiphany members have been working to build a ramp at the home of two of our congregation members, Stuart and Nancy Feitig. The front porch of the Feitig's house is quite tall with steep steps leading down. Stuart uses a walker and it is a struggle for him to get in and out of the house.

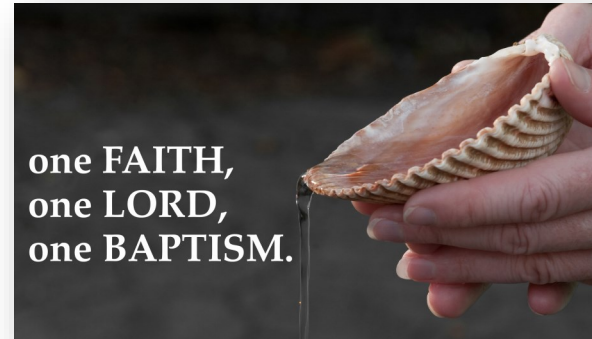
The need for a ramp at the Feitig's was brought before Epiphany's Community Service Ministry Team, and members of that team then worked to obtain a building permit and funding for the project. Donated funds and materials for the ramp have been given by Thrivent, Home Depot, American Legion Post 361 and Epiphany. Also, members of Epiphany as well as some American Legion Post members have put in a significant amount of volunteer work time designing and building the ramp.

A huge THANK YOU to all who contributed towards this project that is helping two VERY grateful members of our congregation!

By mid-July, the ramp was at 97 percent completion with plans to have it ready for final building inspection by the end of July.



August Baptism Birthdays



Thank You

Dear Friends of Epiphany,
Many thanks for the beautiful and thoughtful cards and other expressions of care and concern during Chick's back surgery. Thanks so much to the pastors visits and the lovely altar flowers. We hope to be with you all soon. With sincere love,
Ruby and Chick Walters

Dear Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church,
Thank you so very much for your gift to the mission and ministry of GraceInside. We are so grateful for the support of Epiphany. You all offered me so much hospitality. Thank you for extending it to the men and women in prison!
Lynn Letchfield

Bette-Lou and I would like to express our thanks to everyone in the Epiphany Family for the prayers, cards, visits, and call these past months.
The altar flowers were beautiful and brightened up the room and my attitude. Thanks especially to Pastors Phillip, Joseph and Tom for their visits. We felt the community of Epiphany present.
Also thanks to the Youth Group for the Christmas carols at my hospital room– the patients on the entire Hall expressed their enjoyment. Also the church for the Easter Basket and plant.
It has been a long time away from Epiphany - hopefully soon I can return and enjoy the church services and everyone. Many thanks to all.
Marv Ulmer

Community Service Ministry

The LAMB's Basket

We want to thank you for your gracious gifts of food and money to assist us in supporting the work at The Lamb's Basket. Our June food drive brought in 564 lbs. of food and \$686 in monetary contributions. Our congregation has again shown its giving spirit, and for that we are grateful. As always, we ask for your on going support of LAMB's Basket through food, funds and volunteers.

HHOPE's Fruit Sundays

Please remember HHOPE's "Fruit Sundays" when you go shopping. Every month there is a fifth Sunday, the HHOPE ministry team collects canned fruit and/or bottles of (64 oz.) apple juice. Our next "fruit Sunday" will be Sunday, August 30th.

CARITAS

Last October our congregation opened its arms and welcomed CARITAS guests for a week. During the week over 125 members of our church provided 40 women a safe place to sleep, warm dinners, lunches, hot showers, laundered clothes, and a warm smile. Throughout this week, members of all ages and talents made sure this was a successful week. Again we will call upon the congregation to welcome CARITAS October 17 - 24. Mark your calendars and watch for the sign-up sheets in September, and we look forward to your continued participation.
Thank you!

Mark Your Calendars!

Caroline Furnace Workweek! September 18-20, 2015



Campus Ministry

In a few weeks our University of Richmond and VCU students will be returning to campus. We look forward to seeing them in worship as they begin their fall schedules. Each year we provide opportunities for worship, as well as times of fellowship and Bible study, for our students. We provide transportation to and from worship for our UR students through a rotation of van drivers. These individuals drive the church van to the UR campus picking up students near the Tyler Haynes Commons, bringing them to Epiphany for worship and returning them to campus following the service. With the number of volunteers, a driver would need to commit to two to three Sundays a semester. The first Sunday our students will be back is August 23 and we will offer transportation beginning that day. On Sunday, September 6, we will have a Welcome Back Lunch after the late service in the Star Lodge. If you are willing to serve as a shuttle driver or assist with our semester activities, please contact Pastor Joseph at pastorjoseph@epiphanyelca.org or Christy Huffman at cvanolinda@epiphanyelca.org.



Epiphany Youth Group



Serving a meal together at CARITAS during the first week in June



At Roanoke College for KAIROS the last week in June. No matter what we suffer, we count it as ALL JOY because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ!

Reflections from the National Youth Gathering in Detroit

Before going to Detroit I had no idea what to expect, but when we arrived we were welcomed with open minds, big smiles, and high fives from volunteers and citizens. Throughout the event locals stopped on the street to take our pictures and help us with directions.

All 30,000 youth came together to donate over \$400,000 for the Walk for Water campaign, clear 3,200 vacant lots, and affect 600 neighborhoods. That is incredible. Everyone came together to accomplish more than I could have ever imagined. While Detroit may not be perfect, it is still an amazing city filled with hope and faith.

- Erin Wachter



There wasn't one specific moment where I knew God was with me, the entire gathering was one TREMENDOUS God moment. From seeing how caring and appreciative the people of Detroit were doing to the day, to how all 30 thousand of us took over the city at night, it was truly mind blowing (in a good way).

On the first full day we were in Detroit, during Final 15, Mr. Scott said something that made me feel super happy. He said that during one of the speakers, people from a different church that sat next to him, would not stop talking, so he looked over at us and seeing all of us so captivated and devoted to listening to the speaker was his "God moment" of the day. In that moment, he said that he realized how great that this group of youth really is and was going to be for the rest of the trip. It was just unreal and nice to hear that he saw God in us when we all saw God in the pastor that was speaking. That in the midst of all the craziness, in that moment, we were able to be someone's light and we didn't even know.

Then God came into focus for me on our service day. Erin, Callie, Matt, Alex, and I were working on pulling up weeds and sweeping up the broken glass and at one point I think we all just stopped what we were doing and looked inside the house and saw that there was still food in the pantry, newspapers on the floor; we all wanted to know the story of this house. It was unbelievable to imagine that a family probably stood in the same places that we were, doing every day, normal things, and here we were cleaning up a house that was hard to even look at. Matt said that that experience made him so grateful for what he had, and that spoke for all of us.

Lastly, I forget which speaker said this, but this line really stuck with me, "God does not create generic people." I have never heard anything more true than that. Everyone on this trip has something amazingly unique about them which makes them so easy to love.

Before this year, I wasn't very involved with the youth group, did a few events here and there, but now I see God in each of my new, brilliant friends. They have been so welcoming and for that I couldn't be more thankful.

Yes, we had some bad days on this trip, but being surrounded with such an incredible, thoughtful, funny, and bright group of people at the end of the day, made this trip unforgettable. "God does not create generic people."

- Hannah Charleston

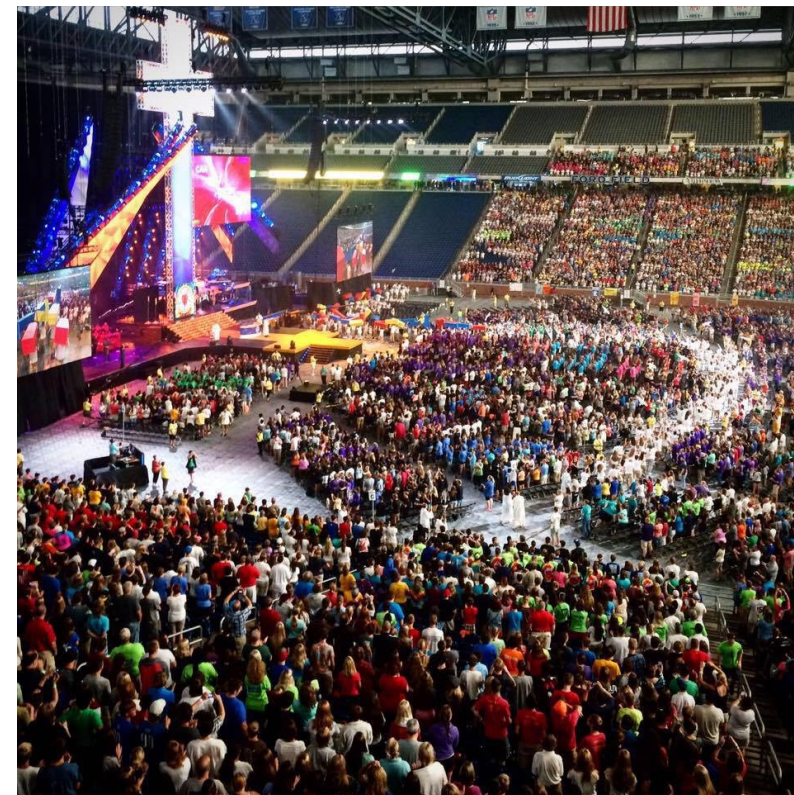
Like many of the other Youth going on the Detroit trip, I had no idea what to expect. I went to Detroit knowing that God always has something better planned for us than we can ever imagine for ourselves. The 2015 Rise Up National Youth Gathering in Detroit proved just that. Being surrounded by thirty-thousand Lutherans was a powerful experience. I am thankful to have been able to see God's church come together, formed by many different congregations from many different states.

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them." Two or three is all it takes, and we were there, thirty-thousand of us, gathered in Christ's name. And do you know what? Not only was Christ with us, he was working through us and around us to make sure that we left Detroit knowing that it is rising up.

So thank you to everyone in this congregation for giving us another opportunity to grow in faith and share in God's love.

Thank you for supporting us as we embarked on this mission and journey alongside Christ.

Katy Gattuso



One thing that I noticed about our time spent in Detroit was a hunger to serve. I, myself didn't recognize that it was there, and I don't think very many others realized that they had as deep of a desire to serve others as was exhibited on Saturday. Looking back on it, I think we all surprised ourselves with how much we, ourselves, were fed by serving. I think what was most interesting was that our day of service was not glamorous, it was not comfortable, and it was not designed to be particularly fun, but it was the day that I, personally, enjoyed most and I also heard the most positive feedback about from the whole group.

- Olivia Dillard