



# The Epistle

December, 2023

St. Philip Lutheran Church

## Pastor's Message

We are blessed at St. Philip to have recently received 16 new members to our ministry here! They are: Patty Herman, Jeania Schaper, Jeff Kaiser and Tracey Maroney, Doug and Bibbi Klima, Sherry Arevalo, Stephen and Laura Tirado, Bruce and Doris Trant, Truth and Elie Fingila (and their son, Darile, by baptism earlier in the year), and Don and Candice (Candi) Teeter. Praise God for leading them here to us. Please make a point of introducing yourself to them if you haven't already. We want to welcome them warmly into our midst. We have now received 54 new members in the past two years. To God be the glory!

I am also pleased to announce that we have now had five or six consecutive months of increased worship attendance. From an average of 121 in June, to 138 in July, to 142 in August, to 147 in September, to 151 in October, and finally 152 in November! There is a move of the Holy Spirit in this place, and I rejoice to see the spiritual and numerical growth. God continues to bless us with visitors, and they all mention how warm, welcoming, and hospitable we are. So, thank you for taking your worship life seriously and "sharing the love of Christ" within this place.

I would like to give you an update on our financial pledges for the upcoming year. To date, we have received 81 pledges for over \$383,000. Thank you so much for your faithful financial stewardship here in God's house. If you have not already done so, please fill out your pledge card and submit it soon, as we are beginning to address next year's budget. Thank you so much.

Josh Starling from North Raleigh Ministries sent me an email yesterday, thanking me for my role in raising the offering - which was designated for NRM -- for the North Raleigh Interfaith Ministries Annual Thanksgiving worship service.

I spoke briefly on how we at St. Philip had partnered with NRM to serve our neighbors in need, particularly with recent food drives. I stated how highly we regarded their ministry in North Raleigh. He shared in the email that a couple attending the service was moved and told him "that God spoke to their hearts during the service," and when they got home, they visited NRM's website to further research them and then pledged \$100,000. You never know how a few words of affirmation can impact someone's heart. We thank God that we are a small part of God's vast Kingdom and that we have a substantial role in helping to serve God's people in need. Again, to God be the glory!

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2: 1-7). All the facts you see above concerning new members, increased worship attendance, giving in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and making provision for those in need - are all due to the birth of that baby. It is all due to who Jesus was and what he came to do and what he is still doing. Thank you so much for opening your hearts to him and allowing him to be glorified through you. You are an amazing group of Christ-followers in this place, and I give God thanks and praise for the gift of you. A great Christmas gift indeed. Merry Christmas!

In Christ's name,  
Pastor Tim



## Christmas Interactive Theater & Dinner

Dec. 17, 4:30pm in Luther Hall.

All ages welcome!

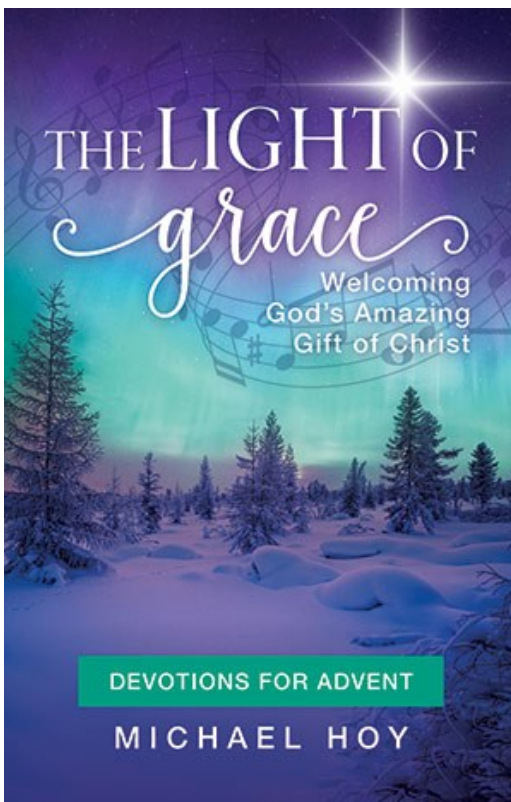
Mark your calendars for a fun-filled hands-on afternoon where you can experience the Christmas story in a new way followed by a congregational dinner! You don't want to miss this!

At 4:30pm we begin our Interactive Theater component where we will invite groups to re-enact a section of the Christmas story. (No one needs to learn any lines!) We'll have a lot of costumes and props for people to use. In between each re-enactment we'll sing a lot of the classic Christmas Hymns together.

We hope everyone, regardless of age will come and join us!

At 5:30pm we'll have a congregational dinner with special food options for all ages.

PEACE *LOVE* HOPE *JESUS* PEACE *LOVE* HOPE *JESUS*



### Advent 2023

You are invited to join the churchwide journey through Advent with your daily devotions guided by The Light of Grace.

The light of grace is coming to greet us in this Advent season as we ponder the free gift of God's Son, Jesus, born on Christmas.

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the hymn "Amazing Grace," these devotions enlighten the heart, mind and soul with the Good News that the Light of the World graces us with his presence every day of our lives. Woven in these devotions are the words of John Newton's lyrics to his famous hymn. May we hold firmly to Christ's amazing grace through faith, and may that grace light the way for our Advent and Christmas.

The devotionals books are available to take home with you from the Narthex & Kepley Hall.



# The BASICS of

**Pastor's Bible Study**  
 Wednesdays in the Music Room or by Zoom

The topic this year is “The Basics of the Christian Faith.” How much do we really know and understand about our faith?

We are going to delve deeply into God’s Word as we study together a variety of topics. We’ll meet weekly on Wednesdays at 10:30 am & 6:45 pm. Everyone is welcome to join, we hope to see you there!

Zoom in the Morning: [Click Here](#)

Zoom in the Evening: [Click Here](#)



## Holiday Smiles

Pick up a “Holiday Smile” starting Sunday, December 3, and give a child at Families Together a Christmas they will remember!

### Holiday Smiles: Providing Hope to Children in Our Community

Each year, Families Together has a special annual tradition that provides Christmas Gifts to children in their program who are experiencing hardship and even homelessness.

St. Philip has committed to asking people from our faith community to sponsor 25 children this year through their Holiday Smiles program. Starting on Sunday, December 3 you will be able to pick up the name of a child off of the Christmas Tree in the Narthex.

As a sponsor, you will be provided the name and items needed for a child. Each list includes the size for shoes, pants, and shirts that the kid wears as well as a wish list toy item that they would like for Christmas. The kids NEED the clothes, and the toy item is a WANT. Please plan to purchase the clothes and the toy. Once you have purchased gifts with the wish list as your guide (a recommended \$50-\$75 per child), please wrap those gifts together and attach the tag with the information about the kid onto the gift(s). You can drop those wrapped gifts off between Dec. 12-15th at St. Philip. We’ll get those gifts to Families Together who will then pass the gifts to the parents of the child(ren) to give out on Christmas.

We would love to encourage you to find someone that you could partner with to do the shopping for one of the children on a Holiday Smile or feel free to take one on your own.

If you have any questions, please contact Kai Thurow at [kai@st-philip.org](mailto:kai@st-philip.org)

# Faith & Fellowship

## Monthly Breakfast Group—

Tuesday 12/19 at 9:30 am

We will meet at Falls River Café

10630 Durant Rd. (use the Bojangles driveway to their parking).

Spread the word and invite a friend for this casual time of fellowship and conversation!

Contact Frank Bouknight for more information. [bouknightf@yahoo.com](mailto:bouknightf@yahoo.com) or 919-302-1812

## Pub Ministry

Pub Ministry will not meet this month.

Contact Dave Wahlstrom at [dave00256@gmail.com](mailto:dave00256@gmail.com) for more information.



Our next dinner is at 6:30 on December 12<sup>th</sup> at Sassool, Harvest Plaza Shopping Center  
Questions?

contact Carol Rogers [parakayaker@gmail.com](mailto:parakayaker@gmail.com)

Everyone is invited!!



12:00 pm on Thursday, December 2<sup>7th</sup>

Please contact Claire Muller for the location & RSVP for the reservation.

919-349-5577 or

[clairegm855@gmail.com](mailto:clairegm855@gmail.com)

Every 1st Thursday!

Hope to see you there!

## Adult Book Club

Everyone is welcome!

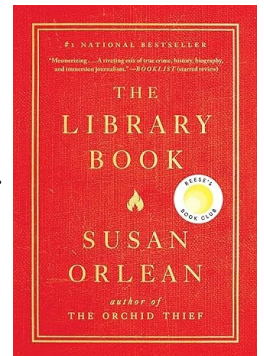
Our next meeting will on January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 in the Parlor.

We will be discussing *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean.

On the morning of April 29, 1986, a fire alarm sounded in the Los Angeles Public Library. As the moments passed, the patrons and staff who had been cleared out of the building realized this was not the usual fire alarm. As one fireman recounted, "Once that first stack got going, it was 'Goodbye, Charlie.'" The fire was disastrous: it reached 2000 degrees and burned for more than seven hours.

Brimming with her signature wit, insight, compassion, and talent for deep research, *The Library Book* is Susan Orlean's thrilling journey through the stacks that reveals how these beloved institutions provide much more than just books—and why they remain an essential part of the heart, mind, and soul of our country. It is also a master journalist's reminder that, perhaps especially in the digital era, they are more necessary than ever.

We hope to see you there! Contact Kathryn Edwards for more info. [itsmekge@gmail.com](mailto:itsmekge@gmail.com)



On the second Tuesday of every month we get together for a shared lunch, good conversation and a program. Everyone is welcomed to attend!

**December 12th at 10:45 am** in Luther Hall.

Our special Christmas lunch will be visited by the preschoolers singing for us! We'll also have some Christmas fun & games. Please RSVP to Carole Mason in order to plan. 919-210-0727.

# Pub Ministry

## Fellowship & Service

November wrapped up our year with our last gathering for 2023. We had 24 reservations and everyone had a great evening of Fellowship.

November also brought the conclusion of the Food Drive for North Raleigh Ministries. With the Leadership of Kai and the support of The Pub Ministry and especially the St. Philip family, we were able to benefit North Raleigh Ministries with cash donations of almost \$12,700.00 and all of the food items all of you donated.

This act of Outreach and service will greatly benefit the mission of North Raleigh Ministries. Below is a picture of the delivery of the check to NRM.

Carol Mason was representing the church with the donation of Choir Robes.

Thank you ALL for your year long support.



### Christ Caring for People through People

That's the motto of Stephen Ministry. The Stephen Minister's role is to bring God's love into the lives

of people who are going through a time of transition or experiencing a crisis.

#### What do Stephen Ministers do?

They listen, care, support, encourage, and pray with and for a person who is hurting. And during this confidential, one-to-one, caring relationship, God's healing love comes pouring through.

If you or someone you know is going through a difficult time—large or small—and could benefit from the caring presence of a Stephen Minister, talk to Pastor Tim or a Stephen Ministry Leader.

**Our Stephen Ministers are ready to care for you!**

Stephen Leader:

[Kathy Blum](#)

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### Our Housing and Family Services Team Successes

Our Housing and Family Services Team works tirelessly every single day to help move families forward in their journey to success and stable housing. Since July of this year, 18 families have been permanently housed and there have been 11 program graduates. Additionally, there were 11 new jobs obtained by members of our families and we added 9 new landlord partners to our network. The tireless efforts of our H&FS Team means that families in our program are given the best opportunities to have long-term success for themselves and their families. With this award we will be able to help more families with children in Wake County.

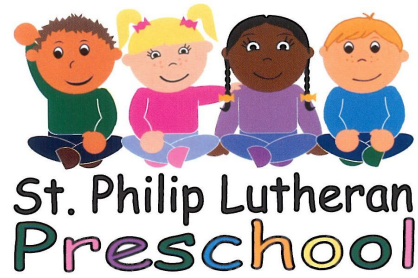


**FAMILIES TOGETHER**  
a PLM organization





# Christmas Worship SCHEDULE



*Christmas Eve Sunday morning*  
One service at 10:00

*Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship  
with Holy Communion*  
**4:00 pm—Family Worship Service**  
Crossin Praise Team  
**7:00 pm—Traditional Worship**  
Music led by Voices of Praise



JOYFUL  
Merry  
AND  
Blessed


December brings lots of fun, JOY and praise to the preschool classrooms!!

Santa visits the preschool on Friday, December 1st from 11:00am – 1:00pm. There will be lots of games, activities, and of course yummy cookies to eat with Santa!

Our children will be singing for the Saints and Sinners on Tuesday, December 12th. We will have birthday parties for Jesus and share the Christmas story at our Christmas Program on Friday, December 15th at 9:30am in the sanctuary. All are welcome!

We are blessed to be a part of this wonderful church family and appreciate all you do for us! We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as we reflect upon the greatest gift of all.... Jesus Christ!!

If you ever want to be filled with JOY, then visit our wonderful preschool!



With the Advent season already upon us and Christmas rapidly approaching, I would like to invite everyone to share in expressing our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the dedicated staff of St. Philip by contributing to this year's Staff Christmas Gift.

You can either place your gift in the offering plate or send it in on-line, but please be sure to do so no later than January 15 and to mark it Staff Christmas Gift.

Blessings,  
Paul Augustowski, Council President

## Family Christmas Eve Worship Service– 4:00pm

Join us for a fun and interactive family-friendly Christmas Eve Worship service with our Crossing Band at 4pm on Christmas Eve in the Sanctuary.

We'll learn about the Christmas story together in worship by witnessing a conversation with a very opinionated Christmas Tree as we celebrate the birth of Jesus!

Everyone—all ages—are invited to attend this special service.  
See you then!



PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

## FAMILY ADVENT KIT

Our Advent Kits for families with children (ages 2-grade 6) are available to be picked up in the office hallway at any time starting Sunday, Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

These Advent Kits have crafts, a scavenger hunt, daily devotions, a story book, and even some songs for the family to enjoy as you prepare for Christmas this Advent season.

## A CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS

### Children and Youth December Calendar

3 -	Youth Group Christmas Party (grades 6-12)	7:30pm
10 -	Discipleship Academy Seminar Course: Catechism – Apostle's Creed	12:30pm
17 -	Interactive Christmas Theater (all ages)	4:30pm
	Christmas Dinner (all ages)	5:30pm
24 -	Family Christmas Eve Worship Service	4:00pm
24 -	Traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship Service	7:00pm

For more information about Children & Youth activities please contact [Kai@st-philip.org](mailto:Kai@st-philip.org)



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If you would like to place a Poinsettia in the Church Sanctuary to decorate for the Christmas Season, please fill out this form. You may also fill out the online form—[click HERE.](#)

Make your check payable to:  
“St. Philip Lutheran Church” for \$10.00  
and mark for “Poinsettias”.

**The deadline is December 18th**

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# \_\_\_\_\_



# Message from Finance Committee

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to report that income rebounded in October after being down in the previous two months. For the month, total income was \$53,420 or \$5,981 over plan, and expenses were \$49,798, or just \$240 under plan. On a year-to-date basis, total income was \$495,517, or \$14,198 over plan, and expenses were \$447,498, or \$33,975 under plan. Income has exceeded expenses by \$48,176, although expenses do not include budgeted reserves which are accounted for at year-end.

We are in good shape heading into the last two months of the year and, as long as giving stays strong in November and December, we should be able to meet our budget, fund our reserves and be in a good position move forward very positively with our ministries in the year ahead.

As always, thank you for your continued generosity in support of our ministries at St. Philip. We have been truly blessed with inspired giving.

Blessings,  
Jim Beck  
Finance Chair



				October, 2023 Financial Summary		
Giving	Actual	Plan	%			
October 2023	\$ 53,420	\$ 47,439	113%			
Year to Date	\$495,517	\$481,319	103%			
Category	Current Month Actual	Current Month Plan	%	YTD Actual	YTD Plan	%
<b>Income</b>						
General Fund	\$47,215	\$ 42,500	111%	\$465,288	\$ 425,000	109%
Other Income	\$ 6,205	\$ 4,939	126%	\$ 30,229	\$ 56,319	54%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 53,420</b>	<b>\$ 47,439</b>	<b>113%</b>	<b>\$495,517</b>	<b>\$481,319</b>	<b>103%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
	\$ 49,798	\$ 50,038	100%	\$ 447,498	\$481,473	93%
<b>Net Gain/(Loss)</b>						
	\$ 3,622	\$ (2,599)		\$ 48,019	\$ (154.00)	

The 2023 Annual Budgeted Revenue needed to meet expenses is \$577,374

# December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	2 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
3 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 5:00 pm Handbells 6:00 pm Youth Group	4 1:30 pm Staff	5 6:30 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm Finance 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	6 9:30 am Senior Adult Ministry 10:30 am Pastor's Bible Study 6:30 pm NA 6:45 pm Pastor's Bible Study	7 12:00 pm Ladies Lunch 6:30 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm Voices of Praise	8 10:00 am Al Anon 5:00 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm AA	9 9:00 am Via de Cristo 10:00 am Brown Bag Ministry 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
10 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 11:00 am Traditional Worship 12:30 pm Discipleship Academy 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 5:00 pm Handbells 6:30 pm Congregation Council	11 1:30 pm Staff 6:00 pm Stephen Ministry 6:00 pm Girl Scouts	12 10:45 am Saints & Sinners 6:30 pm Fellowship Supper Group 7:00 pm Preschool Board 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	13 10:30 am Pastor's Bible Study 6:30 pm NA 6:45 pm Pastor's Bible Study	14 10:00 am Quilting Group 6:30 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm NA 7:00 pm Voices of Praise	15 10:30 am Al Anon 4:30 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm AA	16 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir practice 7:00 pm AA
17 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Congregation Meeting 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 4:30 pm Interactive Christmas Theatre & Dinner	18 1:30 pm Staff	19 9:30 pm Breakfast Group 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	20 10:30 am Pastor's Bible Study 6:30 pm NA 6:45 pm Pastor's Bible Study	21 6:30 pm NA 7:00 pm Voices of Praise	22 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	23 10:00 am Brown Bag Ministry 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
24 10:00 am One Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 4:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Worship 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i>	26 Office Closed	27	28 10:00 am Quilting Group 6:30 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm NA 7:00 pm Voices of Praise	29 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	30 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
31 10:00 am Lessons & Carols 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration						



## Sunday Morning Worship

9:00 am – Crossing Contemporary

11:00 am – Traditional style

In Person, Zoom & Facebook

### Congregation Meeting

On Sunday, December 17, 2023, in the main Sanctuary at 10:00 am (following the first service).

The purpose of this meeting is the approval of the 2024 Spending Plan.

Rev. Tim Poston  
Senior Pastor  
[Pastor@st-philip.org](mailto:Pastor@st-philip.org)

Kai Thurow  
Outreach & Youth  
Ministries Coordinator  
[Kai@st-philip.org](mailto:Kai@st-philip.org)

Regan Wang  
Director of Worship & Music  
Ministries  
[chuhrare@gmail.com](mailto:chuhrare@gmail.com)

919-846-2992  
[www.St-Philip.org](http://www.St-Philip.org)

Jane Gue  
Office Administrator  
[admin@st-philip.org](mailto:admin@st-philip.org)

In person Office Hours:  
Mon, Wed, & Fri  
9:00 – 4:00  
Tues & Thurs (Virtual) 9:00–4:00

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## St. Philip Lutheran Church

7304 Falls of Neuse Road  
Raleigh, NC 27615  
919-846-2992

[www.St-Philip.org](http://www.St-Philip.org)

