



# The Epistle

December, 2024  
St. Philip Lutheran Church

## Pastor's Message

I have always found it disturbing when people talk about another group of people without knowing anyone in that group. I find it particularly disturbing when it's someone from a majority group (however that's defined: racially, sexually, religiously, culturally, etc.) talking about someone in a minority group – so, for example, someone White talking about Hispanic people without actually knowing a Hispanic person, or someone straight talking about the LGBTQ community without actually knowing personally an individual who identifies that way.

When you do that, you're talking vaguely and "in theory" about what you perceive to be a monolithic group of people and, of course, you inevitably begin to stereotype. You are no longer talking about individuals with hopes, dreams, fears, and anxieties very similar to the ones you possess as a fellow human being. In short, you are no longer discussing people with whom you are in relationship (and hence, can be more knowledgeable about and compassionate towards) but rather your assumptions about certain communities writ large which you then hold in disdain. It is much easier to do that and fall into errors of ignorance, fear, and hatred than to be curious about – and sympathetic towards – other people's plight.

One of our nation's chief concerns right now seems to be illegal or undocumented immigrants. That's fine. We can discuss that very vital issue. But it concerns me to hear this entire community castigated by people who don't personally know anyone in that status.

Do you personally know any undocumented immigrants? Likely, no – or at least you're not aware that you might, because people are not likely to reveal to you that particular status. They would have to trust you to a high degree to admit that to you.

I don't know many in that category, but I do know a handful. The handful I know are hard-working people who "keep their head down," pay taxes, contribute to the economy, stay out of trouble, have many family members who ARE citizens, and feel that their fellow undocumented immigrants that commit crimes should be deported. So whenever I discuss illegal immigration, I am not thinking or speaking in broad theories; I am thinking and speaking of people I consider friends. I take into account their life's journey and experiences, many of which are indescribably painful. If I were in their shoes, I can't say with certainty I wouldn't have done exactly as they have.

So, here's the thing: we cannot have an open border as a nation. I don't believe any nation with such would survive long. We must have a system in place which can be trusted to negotiate people's desires to come to America with judiciousness and accountability. We must be able to ascertain – insofar as we can – whether people's reasons for wanting to immigrate here are legitimate. And difficult choices must be made. I don't pretend any of that is simple or easy.

The only thing I caution against is deliberating anyone's fate without personally knowing anything about that person. What I advocate for is humility.

*Continued....*

*Pastor's Message continued*

Be curious, read, listen, try to understand someone else's plight with compassion instead of knee-jerk judgment. In my youth, I often used to hear the cliché, "never judge a person without walking a mile in their shoes." I never hear that anymore. We are quick to judge while remaining unconcerned about life circumstances different from our own.

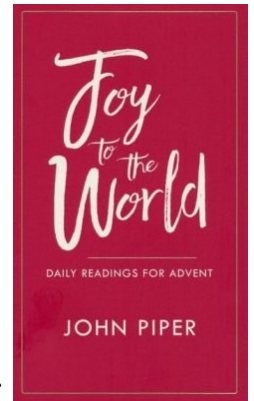
Please don't ever forget: we worship and serve a God who was born in human flesh, and as a baby had to flee his birthplace for another country (Egypt) because it was too dangerous to remain in Bethlehem because of a corrupt, oppressive, and murderous government. Thank God Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled and escaped with their lives. And thank God Egypt took them in.

Merry Christmas.

Sharing the love of Christ,  
Pastor Tim

## Advent is for adoring Jesus

- It is a season of preparation for that special day when we mark Immanuel's arrival—the coming of our eternal God in frail, human flesh.
- This is the greatest wonder of history's wonders, something too stupendous to celebrate just on one day. Advent is a way of lengthening the joy of Christmas.
- Our prayer is that God would use these readings from *Joy to the World* by John Piper to deepen and sweeten your adoration of Jesus this December and keep him as the center and greatest treasure of your Christmas season.
- Pick up your copy—available in Kepley Hall & the Narthex.



YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR  
**CHRISTMAS  
INTERACTIVE  
THEATER & DINNER**

ST. PHILIP LUTHERAN CHURCH



**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15**  
**4:30PM - INTERACTIVE THEATER**  
**5:30PM - DINNER**

*Luther Hall*

**EXPERIENCE THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN A FUN HANDS-ON WAY!**  
**FAITH, FUN, FELLOWSHIP**

**Save the Date! December 15**  
**Dec. 15, 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.

## Outreach Highlights



### Giving Trees: Providing Hope to Children in Our Community

On Sunday November 17, we put out the names of 19 children in the Holiday Smiles program in partnership with Families Together!

And then on Sunday, November 24, we put out tags for gift cards of varying amounts for children in the Angel Tree program in partnership with Refugee Hope Partners!

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of helping to provide gifts for children in our community.

Here's a reminder of what we need you to do if you took a tag off our Giving Tree!

#### Families Together Holiday Smiles Program:

- STEP 1: Follow the directions on the tag that you took
- STEP 2: Wrap your gifts (putting them in a big gift bag works too!) and put your child's name & family code on the gifts if individually wrapped.
- STEP 3: Return your gifts to St. Philip **by Sunday, December 8.**

#### Refugee Hope Partners Angel Tree Program:

- STEP 1: Choose an Angel Tree tag representing a gift card amount from the giving tree.
- STEP 2: Go out and get a gift card for the amount on your tag(s)!
- STEP 3: Wrap or put the gift card in an envelope and put your tag on the outside of the gift card
- STEP 4: Bring those gift cards back **by Sunday, December 8**

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

### Outreach Opportunities You Can Get Involved In Today!

Ongoing Opportunities to get Connected:

**North Raleigh Ministries** – Volunteer at the Food Pantry **(TOP NEED!)**

**North Raleigh Ministries** – Volunteer at the Thrift Shoppe(s)

**Refugee Hope Partners** – Brown Bag Ministries on the 2nd & 4th Saturday each month. Also looking for additional volunteers who might be interested in helping to pick up food for the packing days as needed.

**Refugee Hope Partners** – Volunteer for the “Homework Help Program”

**Families Together** – Join our “Tidy Team” which cleans apartments as clients move in and out of transitional housing on an as needed basis.

If you are interested in finding ways to plug-in or in getting additional information about any of our Outreach Opportunities, please contact [Kai@st-philip.org](mailto:Kai@st-philip.org)







### A Gathering of Grievors 'Chat & Chew'

Grab dinner or just bring a snack and join us in the Music Room on the second Tuesday of each month starting December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

We meet to discuss our losses, support each other, and to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other after the loss of a loved one.

This is a SAFE PLACE to talk about our loved one and to be understood in a culture that doesn't always support us in our grief. Our goal is to build a supportive Christian community in our time of need.

Mark your calendar now:

♥ Tuesday, December 10, 2024 from 6-7:30 pm

♥ Tuesday, January 14, 2025 from 6-7:30 pm

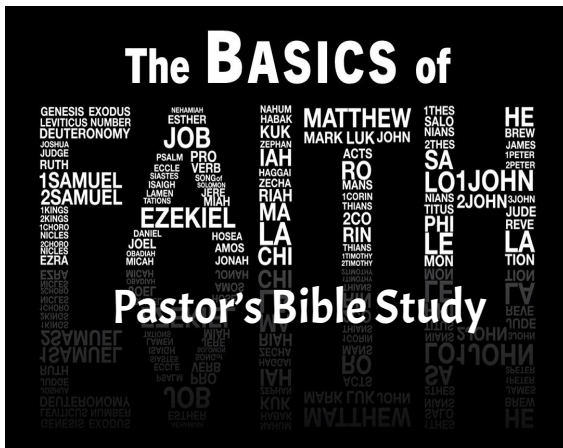
We will meet the second Tuesday of the month from 6-7:30 pm in the St. Philip Music Room from now on.



**WITH HOLY COMMUNION**  
4:00 pm—Family Worship Service  
Crossin Praise Team  
7:00 pm—Traditional Worship  
Music led by Voices of Praise



**Congregation Meeting**  
12/15/24 in between services at 10:15  
For the purpose of  
approving the 2025 Spending Plan



On Wednesdays at 10:30 am & 6:45 pm in the music room.

Our topics include Faith, Tithing, Preaching, Sabbath, Healing, Justice, Transformation, and Music.

We anticipate continued high attendance and spirited conversation. Although we strongly encourage in-person attendance, we will also offer a Zoom option.

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

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

Everyone is welcome to join; we hope to see you there!

# Family Ministries

## Family Ministry: For families with children grades 5 and under!

Join us twice a month for our Family Ministry designed to engage parents' children ages 0 through grade 5. This new ministry model is designed to empower and support families in nurturing their faith together in an approachable format.

**Our goal is for this ministry to provide a place where families can gather, connect, and grow together.**

To do this, we are planning to use a parent-centered approach that models faith, builds community, addresses the growing sense of parental loneliness and burnout in our society, and promotes healthy child development in a safe space.

This month join us on Sunday afternoons, November 3 & 17 from 3:30-5:15pm. We end our time together with a simple meal!

For additional information or if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to [Kai@st-philip.org](mailto:Kai@st-philip.org)

## Children/Youth & Family Calendar

### December

1-	Family Ministry w/ Dinner (birth-grade 5 + parents/guardians) Youth Group (grades 6-12)	3:30-5:30pm 6-7:30pm
15 -	Interactive Theater Christmas Dinner	4:30 5:30 pm
24	Family Christmas Eve Worship Service Traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship Service	4:00 pm 7:00pm



## St. Philip Lutheran Preschool

December brings lots of fun, JOY and praise to the preschool classrooms!! Santa visits the preschool on Friday, December 6th 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 10th.

We will have birthday parties for Jesus and share the Christmas story at our Christmas Program on Friday, December 13th 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!!



# FAMILY ADVENT KIT

Our Advent Kits for families with children (ages 2- grade 5) are will be available to be picked up in the office hallway at any time starting Sunday, Dec. 1st.

These Advent Kits have crafts, activities, daily devotions, and more for the family to enjoy as you prepare for Christmas this Advent season.

## Family Christmas Eve Worship – 4pm

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 exploring the ABC's of Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus! See you then!



## SAINTS & SINNERS

You are invited to a yummy luncheon on Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 in Luther Hall.

This special Christmas season get together to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is a time enjoyed by everyone. You can expect a delicious lunch prepared by our own Debbie Coccarelli and a program full of Christmas festivities, including our Preschoolers who will come to sing! Please RSVP for planning purposes to Carole Mason at 919-210-0727 by 12/7/24.

*Everyone is welcome, we hope to see you there!*

**In November—**

Mike Maness & Lois Knauff came to entertain everyone! It was a lot of fun singing along too!







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 20th*

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS



With 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

# Faith & Fellowship

## Monthly Breakfast Group—

Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 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



Join us at 12:00 pm on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at Carrabbus Italian Grill on Capital Blvd.

Please contact Debbie Voress for the reservation. 919-782-2622

Every 1st Thursday!  
Hope to see you there!



We will celebrate a Year-end dinner with the Pub Ministry group on Tuesday—12/3/24 @ 6:30 pm at

Milton's Pizza & Pasta, in the Six Forks Station center

Please RSVP to Dave Wahlstrom at [dave00256@gmail.com](mailto:dave00256@gmail.com).

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

Everyone is invited!!

## Pub Ministry

The Pub Ministry and the Fellowship Supper Groups will meet on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:30 pm at Milton's Pizza & Pasta in Six Forks Station center for a Year-end dinner. Everyone is welcome! Please RSVP to Dave Wahlstrom at [dave00256@gmail.com](mailto:dave00256@gmail.com).

## Adult Book Club

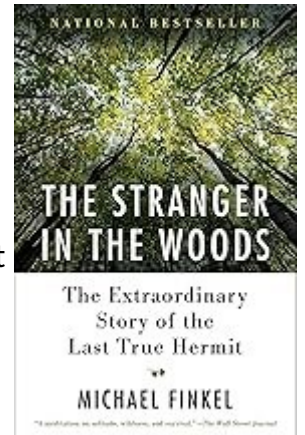
### Everyone is welcome!

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, 12/3 at 10am in the Parlor. We will be discussing *The Stranger in the Woods* by Michael Finkel

Many people dream of escaping modern life, but most will never act on it. This is the remarkable true story of a man who lived alone in the woods of Maine for 27 years, making this dream a reality—not out of anger at the world, but simply because he preferred to live on his own.

We hope to see you there!

Contact Kathryn Edwards for more info. [itsmekge@gmail.com](mailto:itsmekge@gmail.com)



**Cup of Joy—** This fellowship ministry opportunity has been revived!

Please take a few minutes after worship to enjoy a cup of coffee—or tea—and chat with your fellow worshippers!

Sharing a Cup of Joy on Sunday mornings after worshipping and praising God gives us all an opportunity to Share the Love of Christ!

See you on Sunday morning!





# Message from Finance Committee

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After two months of exceeding budgeted income, we fell back a bit in October. We now have two remaining months to try to make up some of the shortfall.

For the month, total income was \$45,851, or \$6,749 under plan while expenses were \$51,264, or \$4,286 under plan. On a year-to-date basis, total income was \$479,721, or \$46,828 under plan, while expenses were \$498,991, or \$25,160 under plan. Expenses have exceeded income by \$19,268.

As we have noted previously, the trends indicate that we could have a substantial shortfall of income compared to our expenses for the year. However, we announced recently that one of our member families has generously pledged a gift of \$10,000, asking that it be used for a matching gift challenge to our congregation. Depending, of course, on the response, this effort could make a meaningful reduction in the forecasted shortfall. If after prayerful consideration, you are inspired to give additionally, please put a note on your contribution that it is for the “matching gift challenge”.

We thank God for you and your commitment to St. Philip and its ministries.

Blessings,

Jim Beck  
Finance Chair

				October, 2024		
Giving	Actual	Plan	%			
October 2024	\$ 45,851	\$ 52,600	87%			
Year to Date	\$479,723	\$ 526,551	91%			
Category	Current Month Actual	Current Month Plan	%	YTD Actual	YTD Plan	%
<b>Income</b>						
General Fund	\$ 39,082	\$ 44,167	88%	\$440,613	\$441,667	100%
Other Income	\$ 6,769	\$ 8,433	80%	\$ 39,110	\$ 84,884	46%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 45,851</b>	<b>\$ 52,600</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>\$479,723</b>	<b>\$526,551</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
	\$ 51,264	\$ 55,550	92%	\$ 498,991	\$524,151	95%
<b>Net Gain/(Loss)</b>	<b>\$ (5,413)</b>	<b>\$ (2,950)</b>		<b>\$ (19,268)</b>	<b>\$ 2,400</b>	

The 2024 Annual Budgeted Revenue needed to meet expenses is \$632,301

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

# DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 3:30 Family Ministry 3:45 pm Stephen Ministry Training 6:00 pm Youth Group 7:00 pm Y12SR	<b>2</b> 1:30 pm Staff 7:00 pm Worship & Music	<b>3</b> 10:00 am Book Club 6:30 pm Pub Ministry & Fellowship Supper 6:00 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	<b>4</b> 9:30 am Senior Adult Ministry 10:30 am Bible Study 6:45 pm Bible Study 6:30 pm Finance	<b>5</b> 12:00 pm Ladies Lunch 6:00 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm NA	<b>6</b> 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	<b>7</b> 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir practice 7:00 pm AA
<b>8</b> 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Girl Scouts 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 3:45 pm Stephen Ministry Training 6:30 pm Congregation Council	<b>9</b> 6:00 pm Stephen Ministry	<b>10</b> 11:30 am Saints & Sinners 6:00 pm Gathering of Grievers 6:30 pm Finance 7:00 pm Preschool Board 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	<b>11</b> 10:30 am Bible Study 6:45 pm Bible Study	<b>12</b> 10:00 am Quilting Group 6:30 pm NA 6:00 pm Girl Scouts	<b>13</b> 10:00 am Al Anon 4:30 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm AA	<b>14</b> 10:00 am Brown Bag Ministry 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
<b>15</b> 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 10:15 am Congregation Meeting 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 3:45 pm Stephen Ministry Training 4:00 pm Christmas Theater & Dinner	<b>16</b> 1:30 pm Staff	<b>17</b> 9:30 am Breakfast Group 6:00 pm Girl Scouts 7:00 pm Boy Scouts	<b>18</b> 10:30 am Bible Study 6:45 pm Bible Study	<b>19</b> 6:30 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm NA	<b>20</b> 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	<b>21</b> 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
<b>22</b> 9:00 am Crossing Contemporary Worship 10:00 am Augsburg Class 11:00 am Traditional Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 3:45 pm Stephen Ministry Training 7:00 pm Y12SR	<b>23</b> 1:30 pm Staff	<b>24</b> 4:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Service 7:00 pm Traditional Candlelight Service	<b>25</b> <i>Office Closed</i>  <i>Merry Christmas!</i>	<b>26</b> <i>Office Closed</i>  6:30 pm NA	<b>27</b> 10:00 am Al Anon 7:00 pm AA	<b>28</b> 10:00 am Brown Bag Ministry 2:00 pm Shiloh Choir 7:00 pm AA
<b>29</b> 10:00 am Lessons & Carols Worship 1:30 pm Shiloh Restoration 3:45 pm Stephen Ministry Training 7:00 pm Y12SR	<b>30</b> 1:30 pm Staff	<b>31</b>				



## Sunday Morning Worship

9:00 am – Crossing Contemporary

11:00 am – Traditional style

In Person, Zoom, Facebook, YouTube

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  
[Regan@st-Philip.org](mailto:Regan@st-Philip.org)

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

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

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St. Philip Lutheran  
Church, Raleigh



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[@St\\_PhilipELCA](#)



[Instagram](#)

[stplcraleigh](#)



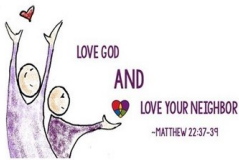
919-846-2992

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

## St. Philip Lutheran Church

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

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



WE SHARE THE LOVE OF CHRIST!

The  WORLD  
CAN'T SAVE ITSELF.  
That's the message of  
Christmas.  
- Timothy Keller