



Church OF THE
Epiphany

Annual Parish Meeting Report

January 26, 2025

Church of the Epiphany-Tempe 
2222 S. Price Rd., Tempe, AZ 85282
www.epiphanytempe.org | Office: (480)968-4111
office@epiphanytempe.org

AGENDA

Opening Prayer

Comments by Rector

Appointment of Senior Warden

Elections: Jr. Warden & Vestry

2025 Mission Plan

Awards/Recognitions

Other Business from the Floor

Closing Comments and Prayer

Staff

The Rev. C. Hunter Ruffin – Rector
Christian Rodriguez-Ortiz – Parish Administrator & Assistant to
the Rector
Matt Flora – Choir Director
Dr. Miriam Hickman – Organist
Nellie Lichtenstein – Nursery Attendant
The Rev. Martha Seaman – Deacon
The Rev. Canon Stephen Schaitberger – Seasonal Assisting Priest
The Rev. Dr. Corey Meier – Assisting Priest

Vestry of 2023

Alex Davis – Senior Warden
Curtis Wood – Junior Warden

Terms Expire 2025

Jan Wagner

Cece Wilhite

Kathy Carney

Terms Expire 2026

Aaron Van Briesen

Jude Wickelgren

Terms Expire 2027

Heidi Thomas

Pat Blackman

Beth Hunt

Andrea Stewart – Clerk of the Vestry 2024

Ann Neal – Treasurer

Karin Crane - Recording Treasurer

Barb Behrens, Kathy Carney, Sharli Schaitberger,
Heidi Thomas, Susan Laidlaw - Recording Clerks

2024 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2024 – 11:49 a.m.

Father Hunter Ruffin opened the meeting at 11:49 a.m. with prayer. A quorum was declared.

Father Hunter delivered his Annual Report verbally.

Appointment of Senior Warden

Alex Davis agreed to the appointment of Senior Warden. Fr. Hunter expressed his gratitude to Alex and Michelle Davis.

Election of Junior Warden and Vestry Members

Curtis Wood was nominated as Junior Warden. Other nominations were invited; there were none.

Pat Blackman and Heidi Thomas were nominated to fill two of the three-year terms of 2024-2026. Kathy Carney was nominated to complete the last year of the three-year term of Linda Spencer-Walters. Other nominations were invited; there were none.

Heidi Thomas motioned to elect the nominated individuals, with the Vestry to fill the third position by appointment for one year. B.J. Reed seconded the motion; the motion carried.

2024 Mission Plan

A net loss of \$78,049 was budgeted for 2023, but it was only \$7,625. The planned deficit for 2024 is \$72,260.

Building Rental Income is budgeted at \$23,304 for 2024 due to the loss of the Black Mothers' Forum Micro-School. The Vestry is researching additional avenues of increasing the income from renting space at Epiphany without compromising our own usage.

The 2024 Mission Plan includes budgeting of General Funds to the Councils (Invite, Connect, Disciple and Serve).

Carol Rascon asked about the status of our Mission Share payment. Epiphany is up to date with our Mission Share payments.

Ann Tebo motioned to accept the 2023 Financial Report. Pat Blackman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Awards/Recognition

Fr. Hunter thanked Diane Spillum and Pam Waterman for their service on the Vestry. They were presented with crystal crosses from Ireland. Dylan Westbrook was thanked for his service as Junior Warden and presented a gift of appreciation for his service. Mary O'Grady was thanked for her service for three years as Senior Warden, for leading our children's formation ministry, her involvement in stewardship, and more. Mary was presented with the Rector's Cross for her service to the parish.

New Business

No other business was raised. B.J. Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting; Lynda Woodson seconded the motion. The motion was carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Stewart
Clerk of the Vestry

2024 PARISH MINISTRY REPORTS

SENIOR WARDEN REPORT

Over the course of 2024, Epiphany continued its work to connect with our community. This work takes many forms and involves the work of most of our parish. Our long-running Serve committee continues its loving work through its many ministries. Newer efforts like the Fall Fest, organized by the Men of Epiphany, welcome the neighborhood to our campus. In addition, during a summer of record-breaking heat, we hosted a local cooling center from May to September in partnership with Arizona Faith Network. While not without its challenges, the cooling center helped us live out the Gospel by helping the least among us. It also prompted connections with more of our immediate neighbors and the City of Tempe.

For the past two decades, the Epiphany community has been wrestling with challenging finances from our debt. While we still have this debt, I must highlight the tremendous progress the parish has made in paying it down. Our combined building and diocesan debt was over \$1.6M in 2021. At the end of December 2024, it is under \$740,000 - a drop of more than half. It is inspiring what we can achieve when we come together. I also need to thank the parish for rapidly and generously responding to our campaign for capital projects funds to replace one of the many large air conditioning units above the church. The more we are able to address our debt, the more we can focus our efforts on our mission to love God and our neighbor.

Epiphany is blessed with beautiful buildings and grounds that have been lovingly cared for by volunteers for many decades. However, as the parish membership and needs evolve, so must our property management practices. We must have a renewed focus on safety and a careful consideration of the work that needs to be directed to professionals.

As Epiphany has welcomed younger members, the number of babies and young children has increased correspondingly. I think it is fair to say that this development has been welcomed by all in the parish; at the same time, it has highlighted for the Vestry the need to develop our youth and families programs, which requires both financial investment and lay leadership to develop and operate.

Finally, I would like to highlight and thank the Renewal Works committee. I am excited to see what comes in 2025 of their leadership and discernment around spiritual vitality at Epiphany.

Alex Davis
Senior Warden

JUNIOR WARDEN REPORT

2024 was an interesting year. An important lesson learned is that amateur arborists are dangerous to themselves. We will carefully balance the use of Sod Squad volunteers with the Professionals.

Our property maintenance costs are catching up to our building and HVAC ages. Our newest building CH (Sanctuary) is 22 years old and is exhibiting age in the HVAC units (5) and roof. We did bid a project to replace one of three, 12.5 ton units that is being replaced as I write this. Thank you to all who matched the gift for this replacement. 20 years is a long time for HVAC units. We have received bids to re-coat the CH roof and will start that shortly.

We discovered in 2024 that we are losing several very large trees to disease (mostly pines). These will be costly to remove (\$3,000 to \$5,000 each) when they become prone to wind damage. One idea is to leave an 8-10 foot trunk and make it into an art piece. Do we have any chain saw artists? As I write this, we had severe wind damage to the tree at the NE corner of FH (Farmhouse). It may have lost enough mass to be unsalvageable.

We are also falling behind in tree trimming. We did have an Arborist trim the 10 Palms after a 2-year delay. We also had scheduled some trimming in the MG (Memorial Garden) that spilled over into 2025. That will take place the day before our Annual Meeting.

I hope several able-bodied folks will join us on Sod Squad Saturdays and Parish Clean Days in 2025. This helps keep our costs down. And I am still prohibited from ladders.

And if you are downsizing and have any tools to give, email JuniorWarden@EpiphanyTempe.org. Rakes, shovels, hand tools – we'll put them to good use. No ladders: we have plenty.

Curtis Wood
Junior Warden

ALTAR GUILD

What is the Altar Guild?

A group of people who minister to the Altar of our Savior Jesus Christ. They also minister to the clergy, supporting them as they go to the altar to celebrate the Eucharist. They minister to the congregation, setting up a space of calm and beauty where they come to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. They minister to each other, setting an example of dedication and gentle encouragement.

The Altar Guild as of January 2025 includes: One Altar Guild Director and one Assistant Director. The term is two years for each. There are Five Teams with three or four members each. Each team covers weeks 1 through 5 of the months. One dedicated member has volunteered to clean all the linens and cleaning cloths weekly.

The weekly Altar Guild Teams does light cleaning and set up on Saturday each week between 9 am to 11 am to set up for the 8 am and 10 am Sunday services. In addition, they clean the altar ware after each service. Team One sets up for the Wednesday service. We had two additions to our membership in 2024. We are still looking for additional men and women to join our team of fifteen.

We all work as individual teams and together when we get together for meetings, one before Easter and one before Christmas. We also get together for a luncheon at the end of the year.

If you can give us one weekend a month, on Saturday and Sunday, we will add you to a team and train you. Our ministry is aging, and we would love younger members to keep this ministry vibrant. If this type of ministry is what you feel called to contact a member or Father Hunter. PLEASE COME JOIN US.

2025 Current Members:

Nancy Keith	Diane Spillum	
Feona Johnson	David Dean	
Yvonne Breslin	Beth Leicht	
Debbie Duncan	Rita Liddy	
B J Reed	Barbara Behrens	
Priscilla DeMoss	Pam Waterman	*Assistant Director
Lynda Woodson	Pat Blackman	*Director
Susan Laidlaw		

Pam Waterman, Director 2024

ADULT FORMATION

The Adult Formation Ministry met during the year.

The theme for Creation Care Season in September was plastics. Members of the Creation Care Committee (CCC) fabricated "piles" made up of single-use plastic items for the altar and other locations around the sanctuary and narthex to symbolize the accumulation of plastic waste in our environment. The Star featured articles with information about various forms of environmental waste. Amy Douglass gave a talk during coffee hour about plastic, discussing what it is, why it is bad for the environment and human health, and what we can do to address this environmental crisis.

The Ministry also worked on how to implement the renewal works information of our congregation.

1. People new to faith
2. Beyond faith, seeking
3. Bigger theological questions
4. Very developed in their faith

A decision was made to work on the first and second stages first.

- There will be a Lenten retreat that will tie into the 5-week Lenten series "Telling the Story of God".
- Going forward there will be Spring and Fall formation classed using "Being With". Facilitators will be needed. Members of the Committee stepped up and agreed to train as facilitators. This will be geared for those new to the faith.

Pat Blackman
Vestry Liaison 2024

AUDIO VISUAL & COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

Communications: Parish-wide communications were comprised of The Star e-newsletter, which continues to be the staple means of communicating events and happenings within the parish, as well as postcards for holidays (Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas), and emails & Facebook posts for most special events. Community communications efforts focused on social media ads and online presence through Facebook, Instagram, Google, and NextDoor. Direct Mailings to the immediate neighborhood were also made with invitations to Easter and Christmas services, which reached roughly 1,700 mailboxes per mailing.

Audio/Visual: We've gone a full year without audio dropouts thanks to the new receivers & transmitters that we upgraded to last January! In October we changed our live-stream hosting service from Vimeo to Restream.io, which still meets our multi-platform streaming needs at a fraction of the cost. With Carmen's retirement we are down one AV minister, leaving the camera station vacant every other Sunday. We could use one or two (or three!) more pairs of hands and ears in the AV room on Sundays and special services. The AV ministry also helps set up music/sound and the projector for special parish events like the annual auction, the Fall festival, Coffee Talks, and meetings.

If you may be interested in assisting with AV, contact christian@epiphanytempe.org

Christian Rodriguez-Ortiz

MUSIC

The music ministry at Epiphany exists to encourage and assist the congregation in praising God in our worship services. We are blessed to have many individuals in our congregation who give of their time and talent to make that happen. We continue to be wonderfully blessed by our talented pianist and organist, Dr. Miriam Hickman.

In addition to the Sunday 10am service, the choir sang for all major feast day services, including Holy Week and Christmas as well as the annual Lessons and Carols service.

If you are interested in joining these wonderful singers as part of the choir, please reach out to Matt via email at matt@epiphanytempe.org. The church choir rehearses on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in the sanctuary.

Matthew Flora

GREETERS & USHERS

Another year has passed and I'm proud to report our ministry is doing well.

Our faithful Greeters and Ushers have adapted well to the established teams for this past year. We have four teams made up of 2 official Greeters and Ushers for the 10:00 AM service and sometimes only 1 for the 8:00AM service. Each team is assigned a week during the year and in the months that there are 5 Sundays (which we have 4), a team has been assigned for that 5th Sunday. On any given Sunday when a member of the team is unable

to be present, they are responsible to contact another team member to trade with them or contact one of our volunteer fill-ins to help out for that day. One of our members on Team 1 had to resign due to personal schedules conflicting with the dates. Most team members are available to assist on Team 1 at the 10:00 AM service helping with the duties that may be needed.

Note: We are also called upon to assist in Weddings and Funerals when needed. Our Greeter/Welcome table remains inside the Narthex with Service Bulletins, and other essential materials for our services. We also have masks available (for those needing them)

We serve as a friendly first face our visitors encounter and we strive to answer any questions they may ask. It is helpful to wear your name badge when greeting, especially for those visiting for the first time.

Please feel free to contact myself or the church office if you are interested in learning the process of becoming a Greeter and/or Usher, I know you will find it to be quite simple and most of all rewarding.

Thank you, to those that have continued to serve on this committee, and I look forward to those interested in serving in the future.

Barbara Behrens
bbehrens7@gmail.com | 480-221-3312

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care in the form of Care Connect calls, lay pastoral visits, and lay Eucharistic visits by Community of Hope members have helped the parish to remain connected to those who have been unable to regularly attend services due to infirmity. Members of the committee have used various Bible studies and excerpts from the Rule of St. Benedict to connect with the spiritual nature of their ministry so that they might be blessed by the Spirit with the wisdom and revelation to be more prepared to bear witness to Christ through their work. There continues to be a great need for visits and though there was hope to train more volunteers, there was only one volunteer recently added to the team.

Heidi Thomas

COURAGEOUS GROUND

I do not have a report to make for Courageous Ground. There was no interest by the parish in participating in another cohort of Sacred Ground in 2024. Pastor Carmen and I focused our efforts on the Diocesan Anti-racism Training. Social Justice work shifted focus to related work in Valley Interfaith Project, particularly housing (people of color are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis and some of the potential housing sites were previously minority neighborhoods taken by eminent domain) and policing of migrant communities.

Heidi Thomas

MEN OF EPIPHANY

Men of Epiphany has been continuing their biweekly meetings to read and discuss The Path, a bible study series from Forward Movement. They will finish up with The Path series on Monday, January 27th, 2025. Year-over-year, regular attendance in the biweekly bible study has doubled from four to eight attendees.

MoE fired up the grills for the Feast of Pentecost on May 19th, which was well attended by the Parish. In the Summer, MoE partnered with the SOD Squad to clean up the area around the Education Building to help the cooling center run more smoothly. Finally, in October MoE hosted the second revamped Fall Festival and Chili Dinner. This year, they welcomed two hundred members of the Epiphany community and beyond onto our campus. Alex Mather Charles will complete his term as chair of MoE in February 2025.

Alex Mather-Charles

BOOK CLUB

The Book Club continues to meet on the third Saturday of the month at noon via Zoom. We have been going strong since August 2020 and our group continues to grow and flourish. Our book selection for 2024 as usual has been interesting, thought provoking and most importantly books we most likely would not have selected for ourselves.

Each of our members brings a unique perspective to the discussion and at the end of the meeting, one feels that every day is a school day, so much to take on board and ponder on. Each year we have the Book Club Christmas lunch, thanks to Leslie Evans for hosting this year, for the course it was the usual four to five hour lunch and as they say, a good time was had by all. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact Gillian Murphy.

Gillian Murphy, gillian@kirkyhomes.com or (480)907 4933

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The theme of Epiphany's 2024 stewardship program was Walk in Love, based on the following verse: "Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:2

The committee met several times to integrate this theme into their planning for the overall campaign. Instead of a single large Stewardship Dinner, the committee organized about a dozen small group gatherings to discuss both Stewardship and RenewalWorks. The campaign culminated with a traditional Celebration Sunday gathering on November 24th.

Alongside the 2025 pledge campaign, Epiphany also supported an Advent/Christmas matching gift campaign. Similar to Advent 2024, the Epiphany community was challenged to match \$20,000 from a special gift to help pay down the mortgage debt. We are grateful for the parish's tremendous response, which culminated in a combined \$43,407.23 raised to pay down Epiphany's debt.

Members: Jan Wagner, Beth Hunt, Greg McAlpin, Jude Wickelgren, Heidi Thomas
Vestry Liaison: Alex Davis

SERVE COUNCIL

CHILDREN & EDUCATION

- **Little Free Library**
 - Epiphany's Little Free Library is for all ages, with an emphasis on books for children and young adults. The contributions of the books for adults by parishioners and other users of the Little Free Library are self-sustaining. Books for children and young adults are primarily purchased by Valri Bauer, Kim Stone, and Andrea Stewart who spent just under \$2,000 on used and new books in 2024. The weekly turnover this year in the LFL ranged between 6 and 12 books a week.
- **Thew Elementary**
 - Notes of appreciation and encouragement are written monthly to the entire faculty and staff. Treats accompany these notes. Twenty-two individuals from Unity and Epiphany currently participate in this ministry.
 - Serve Council coordinated a supply drive to provide items needed in the classrooms in January 2024. Members of the parish provided many of these items, such as Kleenex, disinfectant wipes, crayons, and copy paper.
 - Serve Council provided sandwiches from Subway to the teachers during their evening parent-teacher conferences in March.
 - We started the 2024-2025 school year by hosting a "Back to School Breakfast" for teachers. Snooze provided all the food and drinks for the third year in a row. Snack Day followed when all staff returned to campus. Parishioners helped provide the snacks and drinks.
 - Serve Council and the Welcome Committee bagged prizes and ran a corn hole booth at the Thew Fall Festival in October.
 - Serve Council's annual Adopt-a-Family program helped nine vetted Thew Elementary School families provide Christmas gifts for their children. Our goal was to give each family \$50 in gift cards to Target and Walmart for each child 5th grade and younger and \$25 for children 6th through 12th grade. We exceeded the minimum needed by quite a bit and were able to give each family a couple extra gift cards and help an additional family in crisis.
 - Several Serve Council members wrapped encyclopedias a teacher bought for her students for Christmas.

HUNGER & SHELTER

- **Cereal Drive (Lent)** -- During our annual Lenten Cereal Drive, 751 boxes of cereal were collected for the food banks at Matthews Crossing and Paz de Cristo.
- **Cooling Center** -- The Serve Council with the help of Epiphany parishioners and Unity helped provide water and snacks for the daily visitors. Serve Council also provided some puzzles, games, and playing cards.
- **Habitat for Humanity** -- We worked on 2 properties but had only had 3 build days this year due to construction and other delays. A total of 5 people from Epiphany helped on those 3 build days. The Winters provided lunch and snacks for one of the build days.
- **Matthew's Crossing Food Bank** -- Matthews Crossing Food Bank through their Weekend Meal Bags program provides staple kid-friendly food for needy students to take home on Fridays for the weekend. Matthews Crossing is unable to provide as

many bags as Thew needs, so Serve Council has asked the parish for food donations and has just begun purchasing some of the foods needed to put together more bags. This will continue at least through the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

- **Paz de Cristo** -- During our annual season of Epiphany sock drive to benefit unsheltered men and women served by Paz de Cristo, parishioners donated a total of 488 pairs of new socks. On January 18, Margaret and George Harris delivered 202 pairs to Paz de Cristo, and on January 30 they delivered an additional 286 pairs.
- **Tempe Community Action Agency** – Parishioners donated roller bags, suitcases, duffle bags, backpacks, and umbrellas in good condition to the Tempe Community Action Agency's I-Help program for the homeless.

SOCIAL JUSTICE / ADVOCACY

- **Valley Interfaith Project**
 - Organized its largest public action in several years, gathering 250 people to seek commitments from public officials days before the November election. Epiphany's delegation included 13 people, many new to VIP's work.
 - Introduced a bill called "Yes In God's Backyard" to make it easier for religious institutions to build affordable housing on their land. Bishop Reddall and Father Hunter were key players in the legislative effort that resulted in large favorable House vote but failed to get a hearing in the Senate.
 - Continued to push for affordable housing developments, improvements to our mental health system, and neighborhood safety upgrades. Epiphany leaders attended city and county hearings and worked to convince public officials that solid programs are needed by families in these areas.
 - Engaged hundreds of people in house meetings, trainings, civic academies, and research actions. Epiphany leaders took key roles in organizing these efforts.

Andrea Stewart

WELCOME COMMITTEE

In 2024, expanding on previous efforts and trying out new ideas, Epiphany's Welcome Committee worked hard both to make Newcomers feel welcome and to gather in longtime parishioners to help with activities. We continued to hand-write invitation notes and thank-you notes and updated our Newcomer database to convert 18-month members into an Alumni group.

Highlights: Added event calendar to Newcomer mailings, hosted a Suns game night, headed up the Easter egg hunt, held two B&B events, organized a highly successful Tea Party, assisted Serve with Thew Fall Festival, and greeted event goers at MOEs Fall event.

By the numbers:

April B&B: 7 Newcomers, 3 repeat newcomers and 12 longtime parishioners

September B&B: 6 Newcomers, 3 repeat newcomers and at least 4 regulars.

The Easter Brunch was well-attended and a big hit.

The Tea had 48 sign-ups, 8 no-shows (4 sick/4 no explanation) but 4 walk-ins.

2025 plans: Assist with developing a Hospitality ministry, two B&B events, Easter egg hunt and brunch, possibly quarterly potlucks, Ladies Spring tea party, and Thew and Men of Epiphany Fall festival events.

Committee head: Pam Waterman
Members: Jude Wickelgren, Diane Spillum, Cynthia Wood