



Epiphany Lutheran Church

6430 Far Hills Avenue + Dayton, OH 45459

937.433.1449 + www.epiphanydayton.org

Program Manual

BREAKTHRU

From Catechism to christ

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Erin Haligowski, *Director of Youth & Family Ministries*

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Welcome

Welcome to a Confirmation program that will literally change your life! You are about to embark on YOUR personal faith journey to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and with God's people. You may already have a head start if you have been coming to Sunday School and church for a number of years. You may have some knowledge of the Bible and the stories it contains. However, we also recognize that you may not know Jesus at all or may only be here because your parents are making you attend! Wherever you are in your faith life... IT IS OK! We are here to help you along your journey. There will be hard work, but there will be lots of fun along the way too! God promises us that He will always be with us no matter what, and we pray that while you are here you will find Him too.

What is Confirmation?

According to the ELCA's Task Force on Confirmation Ministry, *"Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission."* Confirmation, also known as Affirmation of Baptism, marks the completion of the congregation's confirmation ministry, a period of instruction in the Christian faith as confessed in the teachings of the Lutheran Church. Those who participate in this program were already made members of the Church in Baptism. Confirmation includes a public profession of the faith into which the candidates were baptized, underscoring God's action in their Baptism.

Program Goals

Epiphany Lutheran Church seeks to provide a Confirmation Ministry that is relevant to the community in which we serve while building upon our rich Lutheran heritage. We aim to affirm the faith of our students and lead them towards a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We intend to view Confirmation Ministry as a joint venture between the youth ministry of this church and the parents of every student. Recognizing that Confirmation flows from baptism and is the responsibility of the entire congregation, we will seek caring adults from among our members to act as guides to our students and facilitators of our program. We believe that discipleship goes hand in hand with authentic Christian fellowship and with Biblical truth. One is just as important as the other. In fact, one can't exist without the other. Consequently, it is our goal that each of our youth experiences both Biblical Truth and Fellowship at each of our Learning Events.

Program Eligibility

Students entering the confirmation program should be baptized in a Christian church and have taken, or be scheduled to take, First Communion instruction prior to the start of their Confirmation program. This eligibility will be at the discretion of the Pastors and Director of Youth & Family Ministries. Students should also be enrolled in at least the 6th grade prior to beginning the program. The entire Confirmation program is designed to be completed during the 32 months between March of the student's 6th grade year and October of the student's 9th grade year.

Duration and Structure of Program

Confirmation at Epiphany Lutheran Church is a 32-month program beginning in March of 6th grade and culminating in the Confirmation Celebration on Reformation Sunday of the student's 9th grade year (generally the Last Sunday in October).

The Bridge Year (6th Grade)

Confirmation Orientation will be held in March of each year for 6th grade students and older wishing to begin their confirmation journey. There are **two Learning Events** for bridge year students and **one Lock-In** in the spring, hosted by older middle school and high school youth. There are no specific responsibilities for *worship, service, fellowship, and education* during this early part of the program, but students may begin working on their **first year** requirements beginning May 1st, to be completed by April 30th of their 7th grade year.

First and Second Year of Study (7th and 8th Grade)

Learning Events are scheduled on select Sundays, with a schedule published well in advance each year. Over these two years, students will study the Old and New Testament, and the basic parts of Luther's Small Catechism, including the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. There will be **twenty two Learning Events** during the course of 7th and 8th grade (11 per year), and students will be required to attend **one off-site BreakThru Retreat** over the course of the two years. During these two years, students will have specific responsibilities for *worship, service, fellowship, and education*. First Year (7th grade) responsibilities should be completed between May 1st of 6th grade and April 30th of 7th grade. Second Year (8th grade) responsibilities should be completed between May 1st of 7th grade and April 30th of 8th grade. **There will be an additional orientation for 8th grade students in the spring to talk about Confirmation Preparation.**

Confirmation Preparation (9th Grade)

Students spend the summer and September and October of their 9th grade year doing final preparations for the Rite of Confirmation. Students spend the summer completing a **Discipleship Project**, and there are **two Learning Events** for 9th grade students. There are no specific responsibilities for *worship, service, fellowship and education* during this part of the program. Students will use this time to work on their Discipleship Project and prepare for the Confirmation Celebration.

Small Groups: Why We Do What We Do

The Confirmation Journey includes both large group instruction and small group discussion. Students will participate in a small group throughout their Confirmation Journey, beginning in the first year of study, led by adult Small Group Guide(s). These groups will be both class- and gender-specific so that youth are comfortable sharing with each other. We encourage parents and other interested adults to be Small Group Guides. Small groups usually meet for about an hour during each Learning Event following large group instruction, and materials are provided for small group discussions. Please talk to the Director of Youth & Family Ministries if you're interested in being a Small Group Guide.

Our greatest desire for small groups is that they become a place where students can connect with one another and form a meaningful relationship with a significant adult: *to know and be known*. Additionally, we believe that for authentic fellowship to occur, it must be guided by Biblical truth. Each week we will study and discuss Biblical passages. A portion of the small group time will be devoted to the application of Biblical truths to our lives. Small groups are not designed for "classroom" study (all book knowledge), nor are they designed to be a giant party (all play). Instead, the small group is a place for students to form relationships with others and God so that students can grow in their faith. Small groups make each interaction and each moment a faith-life-learning moment.

BreakThru Small Groups are designed for students who are at a point in their spiritual lives where they are exploring the possibility of committing to Christ and to fellowship with other believers. Other types of students may show up, but that's OK! Chances are those students will either become students who are exploring that possibility or they will eventually drop out and attend events designed for students who aren't yet ready to make that commitment.

We believe in small groups BECAUSE in small groups, students can be...

- Known and accepted for who they are.
- Verbal and discuss important life issues.
- Accountable to a spiritual mentor, and challenged to grow spiritually.
- Taught personalized applications of Biblical truths and find help for the real problems that they face.

Participant Expectations

A successful and relevant Confirmation Ministry must be a partnership between the students, families, and the congregation. Expectations include the following:

As a student

- that you are a baptized member of the body of Christ
- that you have taken or are registered to take First Communion Instruction
- that you study the materials, read your Bible, attend worship, and pray regularly
- that you become involved in our community of faith by attending class and youth activities
- that you take responsibility for and grow in your faith
- that you are prompt and prepared for Learning Events
- that you can communicate your needs for help with the material to your Small Group Guide
- that you will serve Epiphany Lutheran Church through the programmatic responsibilities stated below

As a parent or guardian

- that you will be an example of Christian behavior and commitment to your child
- that you will read your Bible and pray regularly
- that you will encourage your child in their faith journey
- that you will lead by example by nurturing your own faith and commitment to Christ by being faithful in your attendance at Worship, Christian Education, Service, and Fellowship in the life of Epiphany Lutheran Church
- that you will encourage your child to complete all responsibilities and commitments, holding him or her accountable to a high standard

As the congregation of Epiphany Lutheran Church

- that we will expect our adult guides, teachers, and other facilitators of this program to lead by example by nurturing our own faith and commitment to Christ by being faithful in our attendance at Worship, Christian Education, Service, and Fellowship in the life of Epiphany Lutheran Church
- that we will be creative in helping you to be successful in the program
- that we will challenge and feed your faith
- that we will work with each student to the best of our abilities to meet the needs of the families that we serve.

Reality Check

We have our work cut out for us, and it will take the cooperation of student, parents, and the congregation to make it happen. Keeping the lines of communication open is imperative to the success of this Confirmation Ministry Program. We expect you to keep us informed of anything that will affect the student's ability to complete assignments and programmatic responsibilities.

Program Responsibilities

The Confirmation Ministry Program at Epiphany Lutheran Church consists of the following elements:

Learning Events

This ministry is a 32-month program that covers the Old and New Testaments and teachings of Luther's Small Catechism and prepares youth for adult membership and participation at Epiphany Lutheran Church and in the Body of Christ. The majority of the educational curriculum is taught during our BreakThru Learning Events.

Year A

Scripture
10 Commandments
Traditions: Living Lutheran
Epiphany Lutheran Church
The Sacraments
Tough Questions

Year B

Nicene & Apostles' Creeds
Lord's Prayer
Scripture
Faith in Action
Church History & World Religions

There are a total of **26 Learning Events** during the course of the Confirmation Journey (**2** Bridge Year, **11** each in the First and Second Year of Study, and **2** in Confirmation Preparation). Learning Events are the wonderful times on Sunday afternoons when we gather together for music, games, learning, and time with our small groups! Learning Events are scheduled on select Sunday afternoons of each month from 3:30-6:00pm. A schedule of Learning Events is distributed well in advance at the beginning of each year.

What to Bring to Every Learning Event: Parents, since your students cannot drive it is *your* responsibility to see that they arrive **on time** for every Learning Event. To each Learning Event, the student should bring his/her Bible, *Lutheran Handbook*, binder, a pen and a highlighter. (6th grade students will receive these materials at one of their first Learning Events.) Please store coats and hats in the proper areas before coming in to the Learning Event. Retrieve them after the Closing Prayer.

Learning Event Schedule: A Typical Afternoon at BreakThru

3:30-3:45pm Opening (*Welcome, Announcements, Praise Songs, Games, Skits*)
3:45-5:00pm Large Group Presentation
Snacks & Drinks
5:00-5:50pm Small Groups
5:50-6:00pm Large Group Closing Prayer

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend every Learning Event as part of the Confirmation Journey. We want to emphasize that **regular attendance is extremely important** not only for learning content but for the small group discussion and conversation that accompanies the large group presentation of course material. **If a student cannot attend a particular event, then he or she is to inform his or her GUIDE. ALL students are expected to complete a make-up assignment with a parent for any work they miss due to an absence.**

PLEASE NOTE: *We understand that certain family circumstances could affect these attendance requirements. Please speak with the Youth Director about any specific circumstances so reasonable arrangements can be made.*

Education

While the ‘Beef’ of the Confirmation curriculum is taught at Learning Events, there are so many important topics that cannot be covered in the course of 26 Learning Events. Epiphany’s Middle School Sunday School Classes cover a wide variety of relevant topics. Additionally, other educational opportunities are periodically provided throughout the year (i.e. Lent, mid-week studies, Faith Advances, etc.).

Confirmation students should plan to participate in at least **8 sessions per year** of Middle School Sunday School or other educational opportunities during the First and Second Years of Study. Educational opportunities also include attending summer camp and the fall retreat! **Sessions should be attended between May 1st and April 30th each year.**

Service

There is an important connection between faith and service, and at Epiphany Lutheran Church, our vision is to see our faith lived out in service: *“Epiphany Lutheran Church loves Jesus by serving others!”* We acknowledge and reflect the love of God by demonstrating a faith that is active and alive through service. Our Confirmation Ministry seeks to strengthen and foster a faith that is ALIVE by providing meaningful study and opportunities for service. Students are expected to accumulate a minimum number of service credits during the first and second year of study, and “service” is defined as time freely given to complete a task(s) for which the student does not receive a grade or payment. Each student is expected to accumulate a minimum of **twenty-five (25) service credits per year** during the First and Second Years of Study. **Service credits should be accumulated between May 1st and April 30th.**

Generally, students will earn one (1) service credit for each hour of service. The primary exception to this is that for long-term service programs (overnight or week-long events), the maximum number of credits that a student can accumulate is eight (8). Students are encouraged to find opportunities for service in each of these categories—*Worship, Congregation Life, Community Service*—in order to accumulate 25 service credits. Different examples of opportunities for service are noted for each category as follows:

Worship: Usher, greeter, communion assistant, youth praise band, assistant to the sound technician in worship, vocal and handbell choirs, puppet ministry, drama ministry, and more! **Credit is given for vocal and handbell choirs, puppet ministry, youth praise band, and drama when offered in worship; one (1) credit is given for the worship performance and one (1) credit is given for rehearsals for a total of (2) credits each time these ministries are offered in worship.**

Congregation Life: VBS programs, child care, paradise area volunteers, congregational events, and more!

Community Service: Food pantry, parents night out, Relay for Life walks/runs, rake & run, and more!

These are just some of the opportunities that can earn service credits in these categories. Students are urged to ask about or consider other service possibilities, too, where they are offering their time and talents at school, church, or in the community.

In order to receive credit for service, students should turn in a signed *Service Credit Form*; otherwise there is no record of the service performed. Submitted forms will be kept in the student’s file and become the basis for regular updates that students, parents and guides will receive to keep them informed. Service Credit Forms are available at the Welcome Center, from the Director of Youth & Family Ministries and during Learning Events for students to pick up, fill out, and return.

Worship

During the Confirmation journey, students are strongly encouraged to participate in regular worship with their families. Weekly worship connects us to the whole body of Christ, but even more specifically to the faith community of our family, neighbors and friends at Epiphany Lutheran Church. All students should complete **10 worship notes per year** during the First and Second Years of Study. Guidelines and forms for Worship Notes will be provided at Orientation and are available at the Welcome Centers at both campuses. **Worship Notes should be completed and turned in between May 1st and April 30th.**

Fellowship

Throughout the Confirmation Program there will be a variety of opportunities for FUN and fellowship. Each student should plan to attend **at least two Fellowship Events per year** during the First and Second Years of Study, though attending more is *strongly* encouraged! Trust us, you don't want to miss this kind of fun! **Fellowship Events should be attended between May 1st and April 30th.**

Program Retreats and Lock-Ins

There are two program retreats or lock-ins during the course of the 32-month Confirmation Journey. The cost of the 6th grade Lock-In is included in the program fee for the bridge year, and the cost and dates of the off-site BreakThru Retreat is published well in advance so that families can plan their schedules accordingly. Fundraising opportunities and scholarships are available.

The Bridge Year: Students just beginning their confirmation journey will have one Lock-In in April. This Lock-In is hosted by older Epiphany middle school and high school youth. Information for this special event is provided in the Confirmation Registration Packet, available in February of the 6th grade year.

First & Second Year: Students should plan to attend *at least* one off-site BreakThru Retreat within their two full years of study. This Retreat is planned, hosted, and led by the best of the best among our high school student leaders. Dates and information about the retreat will be published well in advance each year so you can plan your schedule accordingly, and the retreat is usually held the weekend before Thanksgiving. Approximate cost is \$75 per person. Going to camp more than once is highly recommended! Scholarships and fundraising opportunities are available.

Confirmation Preparation Responsibilities

In preparation for the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism on Reformation Sunday of the student's confirmation year, there will be some final review responsibilities. These responsibilities will be completed during the summer before and early fall of the student's confirmation year, and additional information will be given during the confirmation orientation in May following the student's Second Year of study. This time of preparation will involve the completion of a *Discipleship Project* and two Learning Events in the fall. There are no specific responsibilities for *worship, service, fellowship, and education* during this part of the program, but students are encouraged to connect with Epiphany's High School Ministry during this time.

Discipleship Project: Each student will complete a *Discipleship Project* to share his or her faith with the members of Epiphany through the use of their spiritual gifts, talents and interests. Students are asked to create a project that shares their faith and life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It can be anything of their choosing. A completed project will include both the project itself and a written description of the project and how it shares your faith. More specific information about this project will be given to these students during the 8th grade orientation in May of the student's 8th grade year.

All confirmation program elements are tracked in each student's individual file and are available at any time for review by the student, parent or guide. These files are available in the Church Office or during any Learning Event. Progress Updates will be sent out periodically throughout the year during First and Second Year of Study, and are generally available upon request by the parent, student or guide.

Opportunities & Expectations for Parent Involvement

It is our mission to restore parents as the primary teachers, mentors and role models of faith for their children, with the church as the reinforcement—not the replacement—of the parent’s duties.

“The holy grail for helping youth remain religiously active as young adults has been at home all along: parents. Mothers and fathers who practice what they preach and preach what they practice are far and away the major influence related to adolescents keeping the faith into their 20s, according to new findings from a landmark study of youth and religion... Other factors such as youth ministry or clergy or service projects or religious schools pale in comparison.” (David Briggs on the *National Study of Youth and Religion*, Huffington Post)

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Parents are, by far, the primary means by which children learn about life and God. This must be the bedrock of our youth ministry and confirmation program. Whether through love or indifference, involvement or absence, good example or poor, no relationship will impact children more than their relationship with their parents. Put simply, **church begins at home with the family**. That’s the way that God designed it.

Consequently, we are seeking to partner with you in your endeavor to raise Christ-following children. We want to be a resource and an encouragement to provide you with the tools you need to complete this task. As part of the confirmation program, we have expectations not only for our students, but also for our parents. We ask that you do three things: (1) discuss faith issues daily with your children through **God Sightings**; (2) that you regularly practice the **FAITH 5** (SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY, BLESS) as a family; and (3) that you participate in **Parent Connection Nights** that are made available throughout the year.

God Sightings: Just like they sound, these are circumstances, areas, or situations where you have seen God at work throughout your day. It may be as simple as seeing God in the beauty of a sunset or as complicated as reflecting on how God has orchestrated certain people, places, or events to occur in your life so that you might see His hand with you. Begin by talking with your children as you are driving them to the ball fields, as you are picking them up from dance class, as you are eating dinner with them, or as you are watching TV. Talk about where and how you see God moving in your life and theirs.

FAITH5: The FAITH5 (Faith Acts In The Home) is a simple, easy-to-implement faith practice, perfect for incorporating into your bedtime routine for five to fifteen minutes a night. When done over time, the FAITH5 carries the power to enrich communication, deepen understanding, aid sleep, and promote mental, physical and spiritual health. The five steps are: **SHARE** your highs and lows, **READ** a Bible verse or story, **TALK** about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows, **PRAY** for one another’s highs and lows, **BLESS** one another. More information is available at www.faith5.org.

Parent Connections: Periodically throughout the year, we will provide a speaker or staff member to present information or lead a discussion about issues teens and parents are facing. It is our hope and prayer that these “Connections” are not a burden to your schedule, but that they become a resource that will better equip you and your friends for impacting your children and our world for Christ. Parent Connections will always coincide with a Learning Event.

Confirmation Celebration

The Rite of Affirmation of Baptism has long been a very special tradition of the Lutheran Church. We honor and celebrate the growth in faith of our youth with their parents, families, guides, and friends with a Celebration Dinner and special Affirmation of Baptism worship service. The day of celebration includes an Open House for members of Epiphany to view each student's Discipleship Project and interact with them. The Celebration Dinner is a time to celebrate the many accomplishments and the significant faith growth experienced by our young people as they prepare for Confirmation.

Confirmation will be held on **Reformation Sunday** in October of each year. **The Rite of Affirmation of Baptism Worship Service takes place at 2:30pm with a Celebration Dinner immediately following.** In the upcoming years, confirmation will be held on the following dates (please mark your calendars now!):

2018 (starting in 2016): Sunday, October 28th

2019 (starting in 2017): Sunday, October 27th

2020 (starting in 2018): Sunday, October 25th

Some expenses at the time of Confirmation may include: robe rental, boutonnieres, formal class photograph, individual pictures, etc. Specific details about everything related to Confirmation will be shared at the confirmation orientation in May after the student's Second Year of Study. **Practice for Confirmation takes place on the Saturday before Confirmation from 10:00am to noon.**

Program Fee Information

Please see below for registration fees associated with each step the Confirmation Journey:

Bridge Year (6th Grade)

Program Fee: \$25.00 (Due in March of Bridge Year)

The program fee for 6th graders covers the following costs: *The Lutheran Handbook* (with Small Catechism), Binder, 6th Grade Lock-In, and Snacks and Supplies for two Learning Events. **This fee does not include the cost of a Bible.**

First Year of Study (7th Grade)

Program Fee: \$30.00 (Due in Sept of 1st Year Study)

The program fee for the First Year of Study covers the following costs: Background Checks for Small Group Guides, Snacks and Supplies for 13 Learning Events, and Guide Appreciation. **This fee does not include the cost of the BreakThru Retreat.**

Second Year of Study (8th Grade)

Program Fee: \$30.00 (Due in Sept of 2nd Year Study)

The Program Fee for the Second Year of Study covers the following costs: Background Checks for Small Group Guides, Snacks and Supplies for 13 Learning Events and Supplies for Learning Events, and Guide Appreciation. **This fee does not include the cost of the BreakThru Retreat.**

Confirmation Year (9th Grade)

Program Fee: \$25.00 (Due in May before Confirmation Year)

The program fee for 9th graders covers the following costs: Snacks and Supplies for two Learning Events, some expenses related to the Confirmation Celebration, and Guide Appreciation. **This fee does not include robe, boutonniere, and photos for Confirmation Sunday.**

Child Protection Policy

Parents and Guardians,

The Youth Ministry Staff here at Epiphany Lutheran Church wants you to know that your children are important to us, to the body of Christ, and to Christ himself. We also want you to know that since they are so very important, their safety is also of utmost importance to us. It is because of this that we have instituted a **Policy for the Protection of Children & Youth**, which every adult who works with Middle School and Sr. High Students on a regular basis, whether staff or volunteer, must adhere to. The failure on our part to adhere to this policy will be taken seriously. This policy is available for review at any time. We do ask that you help us in every way to aid our staff in upholding this policy.

Sincerely,

Erin Haligowski

Director of Youth & Family Ministries

Confirmation Covenant

AS YOUR YOUTH DIRECTOR, CHURCH LEADERS, AND SMALL GROUP GUIDES WE WILL...

- Love and encourage you, care for you, and support you and your families.
- Offer you and your family an orientation to the program prior to the beginning of Confirmation Instruction and again prior to your Confirmation Preparation.
- Provide enriching instruction in the Confirmation program for your spiritual growth.
- Be available to you for counseling, special needs and guidance.
- Lead you and your families in regular worship every Saturday and/or Sunday.
- Conduct the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism when you have completed the responsibilities for Confirmation at Epiphany.

AS A CONFIRMATION STUDENT, I WILL...

- Bring a positive attitude and all my materials to every Learning Event, realizing that it is a privilege to be here.
- Worship regularly on Saturday evenings and/or Sunday mornings at Epiphany Lutheran Church.
- Complete 20 worship notes during the course of my first and second years of study (10 each year).
- Attend 16 sessions of Middle School Sunday School or other education opportunities at Epiphany Lutheran Church (8 per year)
- Creatively seek out opportunities for service in Worship, Congregational Life, and the Community and complete a total of 50 service credits during the course of my first and second years of study (25 each year).
- Attend a total of at least 4 fellowship events (2 per year) during my first and second year of study.
- Complete all assignments and projects (including the Discipleship Project) in a timely manner.
- Attend at least one BreakThru Retreat (7th or 8th grade) and one Lock-In (6th grade).
- Seek to develop a heart for loving Jesus and serving others.

AS PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF A CONFIRMATION STUDENT, I/WE WILL...

- Make sure our child is on time for all Learning, Servant, and Fellowship Events and Retreats.
- Attend worship regularly with our child on Saturdays or Sundays at Epiphany Lutheran Church.
- Pray regularly for our child and his/her spiritual growth and development during the course of each year.
- Engage in conversation with our child regularly about God Sightings and the Confirmation material.
- Engage our child in weekly Family Devotions.
- Participate in Parent Connection Events as they are offered.
- Notify our son/daughter's Small Group Guide when our child will not be able to attend an event and take responsibility for making sure any required make-up assignments are completed at home.
- Review all Progress Updates and other communications regarding BreakThru/Confirmation and our child, and when there are problems, work with those in leadership to resolve them.
- Serve as a parent volunteer to organize, chaperone, or assist in programs as needed.

Contact Information

EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.epiphanydayton.org

Far Hills Campus

6430 Far Hills Avenue
Centerville, OH 45459
Office: 937.433.1449
Fax: 937.433.8715

Austin Campus

10551 Sheehan Road
Dayton, OH 45458
Office: 937.886.9885

Senior Pastor

Pastor Charlie Woodward: (W) 937.433.1449 Ext. 103 or cwoodward@epiphanydayton.org

Associate Pastor

Pastor Jay Shailer: (W) 937.433.1449 Ext. 112 or jshailer@epiphanydayton.org

Director of Youth & Family Ministries

Erin Haligowski: (W) 937.433.1449 Ext. 109 or ehaligowski@epiphanydayton.org
(C) 937.266.7052

Director of Care of Members

Jane Lane: (W) 937.433.1449 Ext. 105 or jlane@epiphanydayton.org