

# BreakThru

From Catechism to *Christ*

## EPIPHANY NIGHT

### LEARNING EVENT MAKE-UP

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE ELCA

Epiphany Lutheran Church is part of a denominational body called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with about 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. For us, as the ELCA, this faith comes through the good news of Jesus Christ and gives us the freedom and the courage to wonder, discover and boldly participate in what God is up to in the world.

We are a church that is always being made new, and at the same time, is deeply rooted in Scripture, Lutheran theology and Lutheran confessions. We are also rooted in the vibrant, diverse communities and rich histories of our congregations. It's through these roots that the Holy Spirit guides and nourishes us so that we can be a church that is both resilient and always new.

Spend some time poking around the About portion of the ELCA website (<http://www.elca.org/about>) and see if you can answer some of the questions below.

**Which three Lutheran bodies merged to form the ELCA? In what year did that merger happen?**

**How many synods are there in the ELCA?**

**What are three duties of the Churchwide Assembly?**

**What city in the United States is home to The Lutheran Center, or the national offices of the ELCA?**

**Who is the current Presiding Bishop of the ELCA?**



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD

Epiphany Lutheran Church is a member of the Southern Ohio Synod (6F) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Watch this YouTube Video from our Synodical Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt and answer the questions below about the Southern Ohio Synod and its ministries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVkUWCxfqtQ>

**What is a Synod?**

**About how many congregations are there in the Southern Ohio Synod?**

**Name three organizations that are supported by the Southern Ohio Synod:**

**What are the two church camps in Ohio that the Southern Ohio Synod partners with?  
Have you ever been to any of them?**

**What are the two Lutheran Universities located within the Southern Ohio Synod mission territory?**

**Which Lutheran Seminary is located in the Southern Ohio Synod?**

**Name two colleges that have Lutheran Campus Ministries supported by the Southern Ohio Synod:**

**What is the Southern Ohio Synod's vision for youth ministry?**

# PARENT INTERVIEW

If your parents grew up in a church, ask them the following interview questions:

**What was your involvement like in church as a kid?**

**How did you worship?**

**What ministries were you involved in?**

If your parent did not grow up in a church, ask them the following questions:

**How did you end up getting connected with Jesus and the church? How old were you?**

**How did you become involved with Epiphany Lutheran Church?**

**Why is it important to you that your kids be connected to a church community?**

## EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH: WE LOVE JESUS BY SERVING OTHERS

We are grateful to and celebrate the legacy we have received from those who came before us. They listened to God's call and committed their time, talents, financial resources, and spiritual gifts to building Epiphany into the wonderful body of Christ we know today. We also know that the work of God's kingdom does not end and we must continue to build ministries as a resource to build His church, to nurture and strengthen faith, and to care for those in need so they can know and experience God's love.

Started by a small, dedicated group guided by the Holy Spirit, Epiphany began as a Lutheran mission church in 1959 and held its first worship service with 73 in attendance in the gymnasium of Dr. John Hole Elementary School in Centerville, Ohio. This community of faith embraced God's call and vision for Epiphany and just two years later, the first church building, located on Far Hills Avenue, was dedicated in 1961. Rooted in God's word, the education unit was added in 1967 and a new sanctuary was dedicated in 1978. The outdoor chapel was built in 1983 to seat 100 people and was expanded in 1993 and 1996 and now seats 300 people.

Under the leadership of Pastor Larry Hoffsis, the church continued to grow. In 1991, with 1,650 baptized members, a new and renovated facility was dedicated to accommodate the growth and meet the needs of the congregation. With a focus on helping people grow in their faith, connect and deepen relationships, and serve the community and world, construction and renovations included the sanctuary, child care center, Sunday school classrooms, kitchen, fellowship hall, and mini gym. In addition, the parking lot was nearly doubled in size.

In 2002, God led us to focus on education when Epiphany underwent a major expansion including the addition of many new Sunday School classrooms, a large gathering area, bookstore, library, and all new staff office space. The Celebration Center was added, providing additional worship space, a full sized basketball court, and stage facilities for music and drama ministry, which allows us to reach over 2,000 people in the community each summer and share God's love.

Epiphany celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2009. As we move forward, we anticipate God's continued blessing and direction as we use His gifts to spread the love of Christ and encourage growth, connection and a lifelong relationship with Christ.

Epiphany Lutheran Church's purpose is to love Jesus by serving others. We do this through worship, service, fellowship, and study. There is a place for you to participate in this mission, and in our church's annual Guidebook and Directory or on our website, you will find many opportunities. We invite you to worship with us at one of our six worship services each weekend. We also invite you to use the gifts God has given you to join us in carrying out this purpose. Take time to look at the opportunities to serve, to study, and to belong, and find a place where you can get involved.

If your family has an Epiphany Guidebook and Directory handy, take a glance through p. 11-19 of ministry opportunities at Epiphany. If you don't have a Guidebook and Directory handy, spend some time browsing Epiphany's website ([www.epiphanydayton.org](http://www.epiphanydayton.org))

**What ministries of Epiphany besides youth ministry and youth events have you or your family been involved in?**

## HOW AM I GIFTED TO LOVE JESUS BY SERVING OTHERS AT EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH?

As we have likely begun to see through our introduction to the ELCA, the Southern Ohio Synod, and Epiphany Lutheran Church, we are all—young and old—called, gathered, equipped, and sent for ministry for the sake of Jesus Christ in the world. But how do we know or begin to understand where God is calling us each individually to serve?

One way to understand our gifts for ministry is to begin by identifying the spiritual gifts—or special talents and abilities—that God has given us to be able to serve his people.

Open your Bibles and read **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

**What do you know about spiritual gifts, if anything? Have you taken a spiritual gifts inventory before?**

**What gifts do you think you have for serving God and God's people?**

This week, we are going to help you to identify the gifts God has given you for ministry, and then hopefully you can begin to identify some places within Epiphany Lutheran Church and even the Southern Ohio Synod where you might be uniquely gifted to serve God and God's people.

**When you downloaded this assignment, you should have also downloaded a Spiritual Gifts Inventory and Scoring Grid. Review the instructions carefully and take some time to complete both the inventory itself and the scoring grid. Have your parent help you as needed. Attach your completed inventory and scoring grid to this assignment when you turn it in.**

Then, answer the questions below:

**What spiritual gifts did the inventory raise to the surface for you?**

**Were there any surprises?**

**What may be some ministries at Epiphany where you might be able to Love Jesus by Serving Others using your spiritual gifts?** (Download and take a look at the "Spiritual Gifts... Now What?" handout for some additional help answering this question.)