

A Word from Pastor Chris



It's hard to believe that we've been together as Epiclesis for 15 years.

We began in the intimacy of homes, and all this time later, we continue meeting and worshipping together in intimacy— though in larger numbers in those first few years.

We're not an especially large church, though in a post-Covid world, I marvel that we've not only survived but thrived. That's because of the grace of God and the steady faithfulness of God's people at Epiclesis.

That intimacy has always been intentional. We said early on that we weren't looking for more church members for the sake of numbers. Rather, we're seeking people who want to join God's big story— the ancient-future story of the redemption of all creation through Christ— and to worship Him with abandon and passion in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that's counter-cultural in many ways. Another thing that's a bit counter-cultural? We think of ourselves as a *pre-denominational* church, because one of the things that's important to us is reconnecting with the truth found in our ancient Christian heritage.

We are a Jesus-loving, Bible-believing church that's orthodox, evangelical, and charismatic in the very best sense of those terms.

Are you hungry for authentic worship that centers on Christ? Are you longing for a place to worship where the only measure of success of the service is whether Jesus is lifted up and glorified? Are you ready for deep, scriptural teaching and discipleship-making that's rooted in our rich Christian heritage?

Then Epiclesis is the place for you. Come join us! You'll be so very warmly welcomed.

And if you're not in the Sacramento area, please thoughtfully consider giving generously to the Kingdom of God through this part of the Body of Christ. You can see here that we're busy and effective in going about Kingdom tasks. We'd love to know that you're praying for us as we walk out our baptisms telling God's big story here in Sacramento. You have our pledge before God to use resources with integrity and care.

The Lord be with you!

Pastor Chris



A Report of Activity for the Year July 2022-June 2023

**Worshiping Sundays at 10:30 AM at the Chapel
4600 Winding Way; Sacramento, CA; 95841**

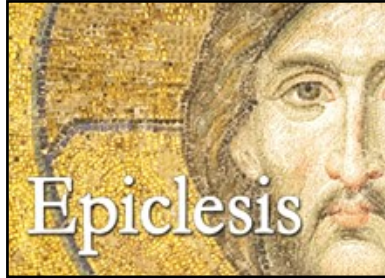
**For more info, to give, or sign up for our eNewsletter:
www.Epiclesis.org**

**Postal address: 11230 Gold Express Drive, #310-214;
Gold River, CA 95670-4484
(916) 572-9113**

A Report for Members and Friends of Epiclesis: An Ancient-Future Faith Church in Sacramento, California.

Introduction

Each year, the Elders of the Church prepare a narrative report of the many activities and ministries that occurred at Epiclesis during the previous twelve months. But we can't get everything down onto paper. Why? Because some of the very best ministry is that which happens daily, quietly, and in a thousand ways by the people of Epiclesis as they walk out their baptisms in the world around us.



One of the most encouraging times in our worship services happens when the saints share how they saw God at work in their lives during the previous week. And by the way, we do this sharing at the offering time to reinforce the truth that giving God our time, talents, and testimony is as important as giving Him our treasure.

Our hope is that this report will be received in that same spirit—testimony to how Epiclesis is joining God in working out His purposes in the world. This report is an offering.

Something we should highlight: It's easy to focus on numbers—those are easy to count. While we believe that facts and figures are important, we don't want to become a church whose primary lens for evaluation is “nickels and noses.” Growth in discipleship, depth in worship, and an enriching spirituality are rarely, if ever, measured by numbers. God has surely blessed our Church in both nickels and noses, but our heart-felt desire is that our annual reports mostly focus on ministry, discipleship, covenant keeping, and Kingdom building.

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The Chapter House is also the location for the **Epiclesis women's monthly second-Saturday morning gathering.**

They get together with each of the meetings being “shepherded” by a different Epiclesis woman. Our ladies report that it is a special highlight of their month!

One other frequent use of the Chapter House: We're pleased to encourage one of our members, a gifted biblical counselor, Christy Fickenscher, to use the space twice during the week.

The Chapter House address is: 7985 Park Drive; Fair Oaks; 95628, across the street from the Plaza Park, Village Park, and Fair Oaks Theater Festival.

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Basic Financial Activity

Epiclesis' income is derived from tithes, offerings, and donations. Expenses are classified as Fixed Expenses (infrastructure and administration) or Discretionary Expenses (all other expenses). Examples of fixed expenses include facility rental, pastors' compensation, and so on. The Elders of the Church prayerfully and carefully appropriate discretionary income as the Spirit leads across the many diverse ministries and needs both inside and outside of the Church.

Total income for the 12 months ending June 30, 2023, was \$249,796.48, very nearly the same as FY 2021-2022.

Expenses for FY 2022-2023 exceeded income, due in part to overages in our Fall and Women's Retreats, to an increase in our Missionary support, and increases in facility rental costs. Our total expenses for the period were \$269,433.10.

The Elders watch very carefully the cash flow and basic financial health of the Church, and Epiclesis continues to have a healthy savings account, part of which has been set aside as a “rainy day” fund in case of extreme emergencies.

Some of the comments from three of our women: "This weekend has been an explosion of love, and healing in the presence of the Lord. The precious love and unity of this group of women is transformative." "Ladies- you again gave us a sacred space to be honest, open & loved." "Our conversations have truly been 'iron sharpening iron.' To be able to discuss differences surrounding important topics, sometimes with intensity, in an environment of love, respect and true sisterhood is special. He's really knitting us together."

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After several successful and happy years at the Epiclesis "**Chapter House**" in Old Fair Oaks Village, the Elders decided to continue our lease and signed a new agreement.

We are now in year three of a five-year lease.

The Chapter House is used for office needs and small meetings, Bible study, prayer, and as a launching pad for ministry. Why is it called a "Chapter House"? A chapter house is a building or room attached to a cathedral where meetings are held. In monastic communities, the monks gather there to read aloud from the Bible, discuss theology, or share the news of the day. In more modern times, the Church leadership uses the chapter house to conduct the business of the worshipping community. We love the idea of recovering and reinterpreting this practice in an ancient-future way.

The Chapter House was again the location for "**Movie Night**" events during the year, featuring, for example, the film "Amadeus," and, as always, discussion and treats.



Please find a report on the following areas:

- Mission and Kingdom Building Activity (p. 2).
- Ministry Activity: Worship, Discipleship, the Life of the Body (p. 8).
- Basic Financial Activity (p. 14).

Mission and Kingdom Building Activity

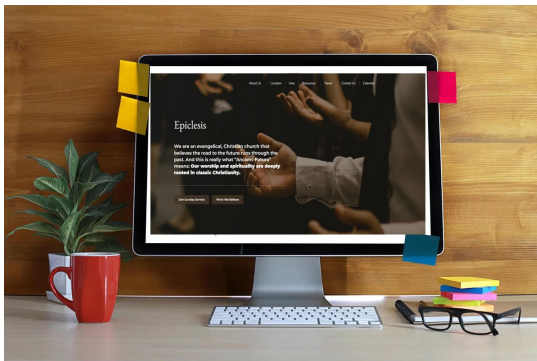
When Jesus gave His followers the Great Commission just before His ascension (Matt 28:16), we sometimes overlook that those instructions occur in the context of worship. The disciples came to the mountain to worship Jesus, and then He sent them forth into the world on mission.

We are on mission. One of the most encouraging qualities of the Epiclesis community is our being Christ to others, not only as a church body, but as individuals. There are as many missions as there are people in the congregation. Most are done quietly, without a great deal of attention. All have impacted the lives of those being ministered to as well as those doing the ministry.

Mission also means resources. At Epiclesis, we strive to have a healthy balance of sending both monetary resources and people when it comes to missions, for we don't want merely to be a church that sends money to a place or a cause and then believe our work is done.

Examples of both sending and giving resources this past year were two of our college-age members on short-term missions trips to Peru (Kaitlyn Bolland) and Ecuador (Aubry Asche). Both young women had great impact in their assignments and shared their experiences with the Church when they returned.

Several significant financial gifts were made in support of ministries that reach far beyond Epiclesis: Funds were given to purchase and distribute Scriptures (the **Gideons**, for example), and we supported individual ministries through connections made by faithful saints in our community of faith (a gift for the ministry of Sacramento's Memorial Garden for the Unborn, for example).



Epiclesis maintains a very robust **website** (www.Epiclesis.org) with thousands of excellent items of content, including liturgies and podcasts.

Apart from keeping our own members informed of news and upcoming events, the website is visited by people

from all over the world. A walk through the traffic statistics of our site is to take a “tour” of nations. It is encouraging!

This past year, the website has had hundreds, even thousands, of visits. The podcast portion of our ministry, which includes sermons, misc. audio programming, and long-form interviews, is also available through a free Apple iTunes subscription. *One piece of trivia:* Typically, each of our sermons will have received dozens of “listens” within days of it being posted.

This year (and it is ongoing as of this report) our website is being upgraded with a fresh look, and our podcast presence is being expanded to other audio platforms.

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One of the primary ways we keep in touch with both Church members and those interested in our ministry is through the **Constant Contact** email and social media tool. Epiclesis has been one of their award-winning “All Star” organizations most every year in the last decade. The award recognizes excellent communications and activity rates and statistics that surpass industry standards.



The Life of the Body

Epiclesis especially loves to bless our college students with “**Care Packages**” that we ship out about three times each school year.



The congregation brings appropriate items to Church and one of our members makes up the packages and takes care of shipping them off to their appreciative recipients.

We also take special time in our worship gatherings to bless and pray over our college-bound kids. This past year, we had three out-of-town university students.

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Epiclesis planned and implemented its **Seventh Annual Women’s Retreat** in the summer (June) of 2023. The location, again, was the Jesuit Retreat Center in Applegate, CA.

Kathi Frye (left) was the guest speaker and the theme was “Running with Resilience.” There were 16 in attendance with four from out of state (2 from Kentucky, and one each from Idaho and Louisiana).

Frye is part of a ministry called “Agape Freedom Fighters” and “most enjoys raising up others to walk in their destiny in Jesus Christ, free from fear and religious confinement. She is a lover of the hurting and seeks to bring each one into the arms of Jesus for healing, freedom and restoration.”

The event began on a Friday night, continued all day Saturday, and concluded with communion on Sunday morning.



A more recent discipleship element to be introduced at Epiclesis is the implementation of what we call “**Cloisters**.” Like home-based small groups, but much more, we named these gatherings “cloisters” after the sacred space found in convents, monasteries, colleges, or cathedrals: courtyards with an arcaded walkway around each side.

That’s what came to mind when we sensed that God was encouraging us to build groups of Epiclesis folks, especially during these odd and challenging times. For us, the Cloisters are also sacred spaces – retreats – places to come for spiritual nourishment, soul friendship, and a time and place to be replenished.

Our Cloister groups meet at least once a month and a typical gathering will include a meal, social time, and an element or two of Benedictine spirituality, whether readings, or prayer, or blessings or other liturgies.

Three Cloisters have been up and running now for over two years, and well over half of the worshipping congregation is engaged.

Here is what Pastor Chris has to say about these very special groups:

“Our world is increasingly chaotic and anti-Christian (even militantly so), and many Christians are reeling with the changes...I also thank God for Epiclesis, for I believe with all my being that this Church was raised up for such a time as this. Sometimes it seems like ours is the only voice calling folks to listen to our Christian past, though of course it’s not. And yet our increasingly bold call to return to essential tenets and practices of the faith seems unique in today’s climate.

“That’s where Cloisters come in. It may very well be that Cloisters at Epiclesis will be for our region what Benedict’s communities were in his day: Quiet, vibrant, and powerful enclaves of the faith embedded in the places where we live.”

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Additionally, Epiclesis uses the **Text In Church** communications tool not only to send messages quickly to connected Church members, but we also use it to send follow up messages to visitors, guests, and other groups as needed.



For example, if visitors choose, we can add them to a special text list that will automatically put them in a rotation of encouraging messages and reminders about upcoming services.

We often use the Constant Contact and Text in Church tools to alert the congregation to prayer requests or other important updates.



Epiclesis also has a presence on **Facebook**. Items that are sent out via our Constant Contact tool are automatically sent to the Epiclesis Facebook page.

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The **Epiclesis AV team** (comprised of one paid leader and several volunteers) continues a busy ministry first begun in 2018, providing a means to share meaningful content online. The specific



goal at its inception was to capture the reading of the liturgy and music aspects of worship from the service, as well as the teaching, for those not able to attend a given service, or those who would like to revisit content. To protect privacy, Church service videos are edited to remove personal sharing.

Content is always accessible on the Epiclesis Facebook page.



The Church has continued its streaming presence since the Covid pandemic and has increased its “attendance” on the **Zoom** and **Facebook** platforms.

Even after our services and other teachings are posted on Facebook, numbers of engagements continue to rise.

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With great pride, we continue to support our specially-chartered chapter of **Trail Life**.



In a way, our association with Trail Life began at an Epiclesis Men’s Breakfast. One attender had recently heard about Trail Life USA, a church-based, Christ-centered, boy-focused mentoring and discipleship journey that speaks to the hearts of boys.

Working from timeless biblical values in the context of outdoor adventure, boys K-12 are engaged in a troop setting by vetted male mentors who challenge them to grow in Christian faith and character, to understand their purpose, serve their community, and develop practical leadership skills to carry out the mission for which they were created.

Several leaders emerged and initiated the troop chartering process. Epiclesis Elders answered the call to be the sponsoring church, providing the chartering fees and legal covering. By late January, 2021, Troop 16:13 was launched, so-named for the troop verse, 1 Corinthians 16:13: “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.”

Currently, Troop 16:13 has 48 young Trailmen registered, 24 registered adult leaders, and is part of a national movement with 30,000 members in 830 troops in 50 states.

The retreat was in many respects a “return appearance” for Teresa, having participated in a retreat for Epiclesis with Ben Westlund entitled “Finding Jesus in the Tabernacle.” This year’s retreat was entitled “Finding Jesus in the Feasts.” Through the presentation of dance, recorded music, rituals, costumes and pageantry, the artists, and in many cases the retreat participants were able to experience how the feasts and festivals of the Jewish culture were, and still are, proclaiming the deity of Christ as Messiah and the fulfillment of all that was promised in Scripture.

The weekend culminated with the full participation of the entire ZCWA troupe in the Epiclesis Worship Service on Sunday and Teresa bringing the message to the congregation.

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The Journey to Jesus: When God leads people to Epiclesis, and they feel led to become members, we like for them to learn more about how the Lord has led us to “do church” in the postmodern world. Then we ask them to walk through an intentional, deliberate process of learning and discipleship, called Journey to Jesus (or “J2J” as we affectionately call it), that fully brings participants into our amazing community of faith.



This process is similar to how early Christians brought people into the life of the worshiping community— as a matter of fact, the basic design of “Journey to Jesus” is based on a method of evangelism and spiritual instruction in the ancient church.

Along the way and throughout the four steps of the Journey to Jesus, there are some rites of passage that we observe in our worship services including a Rite of Conversion/Welcome and a Rite of Covenant.

In the past year, several folks were in the various stages of the journey with their mentors.

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All of our Sunday morning teachings, along with focused, topical interviews and special seasonal conversations are archived in the Podcast section of the Epiclesis website. Complete Epiclesis services are posted and archived on the Church Facebook page.

Epiclesis continued its weekly “Celtic Prayer and Communion” gatherings on Thursday mornings. The service, online since the beginning of Covid, lasts about 30 minutes.



Discipleship



The 10th annual fall retreat featured guest speaker Dr. Teresa Gardner and the marvelous dancers and crew of the Zion Center for Worship and the Arts of Charlotte, North Carolina.

The weekend event (October 21-22, 2022) was held at Christ the King Retreat Center in Citrus Heights and was well-attended by the Epiclesis family and many members of the local community.

Teresa Gardner is well-known to Epiclesis, having visited us many times over the years, and for also being part of the leadership team during two guided trips to Israel in 2018 and just last year in March 2023. She received her doctoral degree from the Institute for Worship Studies in Jacksonville, Florida where she and Pastor Chris first became acquainted.



Teresa (left) founded the Zion Center for Worship and the Arts (ZCWA) in Charlotte and proudly boasts of over 50 trips to Israel, both with ZCWA and on guided tours as well. She considers Israel her second home and has formed many long-lasting friendships there.

The Summer of 2023 was an eventful one and the Trailmen participated in many activities, including a week long camp at Calvin Crest entitled, “Summer of the Bison.”

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Our support for full-time missionaries: After being encouraged by Pastor Chris to increase missions giving last year, the congregation at Epiclesis responded with faithful giving and mission support increased from one to three missionary endeavors. We are currently in our second year of support for these three amazing, worthy missionary efforts across the world:

Dianne Collard (right) has served the Lord with her husband Glenn for 58 years, with 37 years being in cross-cultural missions. She received a direct call of God in 1992 to “find and encourage artists” and has since been seeking to fulfill that unique calling.



She is the founder and leader of Montage International and serves as the ACT (Artists in Christian Testimony) International Europe Ministries Director. Dianne also works with artists in North Carolina, recently leading a virtual book study of “Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts” by Philip Graham Ryken.

In her own words, she is on a mission to “empower artists of faith to serve God through their creative gifts and to build relationships that encourage spiritual growth. I want to live my life in worship of God and be a messenger of His hope through speaking, writing and encouraging for the purpose of contributing to the development of people and the celebration of the Kingdom of God.”



Susan McCrary (left) serves as the Europe Regional Member Care Coordinator with “Teach Beyond,” an organization which recruits, sends and supports Christian educators, administrators, and workers to serve in schools and other organizations across the globe. Teach

Beyond currently has 571 members serving in 50 countries, and 18,300 learners directly taught by its members.

Epiclesis was thrilled to hear Susan share her story and her missions work during her visit to Epiclesis in July 2023 (not technically in this particular reporting period, but we wanted to add it). After Susan shared on Sunday morning, lunch was served at the Chapel giving the congregation opportunities to ask questions and get personally acquainted with Susan.

Tim and Rebecca Ficklin (photo not available) are currently serving in an undisclosed region along with their four children. (Fun fact: Tim is the nephew of Doug Asche and cousin of Rick Asche!) The Ficklin family left all to follow their call to missions in 2022, so are still acclimating to the culture and language, while supporting team operations, and discipleship training.



One of the first big tasks was learning the language. Tim recently updated us with this great news: “I am excited to share that I have completed our team’s baseline language learning requirement! I have met or exceeded the minimum hours of study, minimum time in conversation, and proficiency level determined by a third-party language evaluation. As of last week, I am DONE with full-time language learning!”

“[And yet] Learning the language and culture has been an amazing experience, but it’s not why we came.... As our team members engage in full-time ministry, my job is to serve team members by making every non-ministry aspect of their job less burdensome.”

Ministry Activity: Worship, Discipleship, and Life of the Body

Worship

Ever thought about the purpose of the church? At Epiclesis we ponder that question a lot, and we’re convinced that there is really only one purpose. We want to help people remember why they were born— to worship— and we really believe, with all our hearts, that the only measure of success of worship is whether God is lifted up and glorified.



At our Church, we have several tasks that include making disciples. And we have one single purpose that fuels it all: worship.

Apart from our regular and recurring weekly worship, we also engage in several special services throughout the year associated with the Christian calendar. This past year we had several of them, including two very moving services of Lessons and Carols (at the beginning of Advent and also on Christmas Eve), plus special services on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday (Tenebrae).

Also during Holy Week, on Holy Saturday, Ruth Brown led us in a simple service of Scripture reading, guided and spontaneous prayer, and singing, as we joined in the ancient vigil tradition of faithful watching in anticipation of Resurrection morning. Ruth continues to lead informal and spontaneous evenings of worship and song every few months on Sunday evenings.

During Eastertide, Pastor Chris taught a Sunday morning series exploring the ways in which the Holy Land acts as a kind of “fifth gospel” in telling, and showing, God’s story. For these teachings, he used examples and pictures from the recent tour of the Holy Land he led with Dr. Carl Peters and Dr. Teresa Gardner.