

EPIS⁺LE



*St. Paul's Lutheran
The Church On The Hill*

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Pastor's Message

"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:18-19

God tells Isaiah not to remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I want nothing more than to forget about this past year. I'm not having any trouble writing 2021 instead of that other number. After being held captive by the Covid-19 virus for the past nine months, it is only natural to forget about all the sickness, death, divisions, heartbreak that many if not all of us have experienced in one way or another. Our hope, with the two Covid vaccines that have been made available, is we will see a decline in the former things and a new way and new rivers turning the wilderness where we have been living into an oasis of gatherings and laughter and song.

There is another side of this that I don't want you to forget. I often tell people that even though we are sometimes focused on all the evils of the world and the loss we encounter far too often in our lives, there are also many blessings. Do not let the negativity of daily living obscure the beautiful moments and gifts that are given to you.

This past year, in spite of all the difficulties and hardships and time away from each other in the church, in your homes and in your lives, we have been blessed.

Some of those blessings at St. Paul's this past year have been:

Three couples were married:

Daniel and Paige Olsen, Curtis and Angela Bracher, and Ethan and Kaylin McDonald

We received ten new members:

Ashley Heidbreder, Roger & Nancy Thompson, Kent & Julie Nelson, Abigail Gonzalez, Beverly Boehm, Vanessa Soell, Patty Duncan, and Jake Thompson

Two baptisms:

Landin Jacob Thompson and Caroline May Barker

Ten Confirmations:

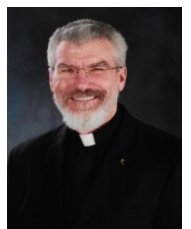
Lauren Stubinger, Marshal Stubinger, Peyton Stubinger, Abigail Gonzalez Stubinger, Davin Pistel, Kambry Pistel, JD Murphy, Christopher Murphy, Kylee Scheperle, and Lexie Plochberger.

Five First Communion kids:

Kiefer Freiner, Lucas Plochberger, Larah Russell, Oliver Stoermer, and Landin Thompson

WE ARE BLESSED

Blessings to you in Christ Jesus,
Pastor David



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

06 Misty Schroeder
09 Marshall Griffin
10 Jenetia Gibler
10 Colin Walters
11 Lucas Carrel
16 Sherrie Hanks
20 David Russell
21 Kathy Meller
30 Kaitlyn Finch

FINANCIAL UPDATE

| Month/Day | Attendance Phys./Virtual | Offering |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| DECEMBER 6 | 06 / 139 | \$2,807.37 |
| DECEMBER 13 | 23 / 239 | \$3,035.00 |
| DECEMBER 20 | 07 / 171 | \$6,495.00 |
| DECEMBER 24 | 10 / 349 | Christmas Eve |
| DECEMBER 27 | 07 / 115 | \$10,310.00 |
| Total | 53 / 1013 | \$22,647.37 |



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

14 Kendall & Hope Stubinger 2006 **15 Years**

St. Paul's Perpetual Cemetery Fund Inc.

On behalf of the St. Paul's Perpetual Cemetery Fund Inc., the Board of Directors extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone for the many gifts, donations, bequeath, and memorials received during the past year. The generosity and support given greatly contributed to continual operation and preservation of a beautiful, well maintained cemetery.

As an update to the cancellation of the 2020 annual meeting, the financial records were reviewed with no discrepancies noted. Also, the outgoing board member, Leroy Plochberger agreed to continue to serve in his present capacity until the 2021 annual meeting. Again, should anyone have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any members of the Board of Directors.

Special Gifts Included:

Thank you:

Richard & Rosemary for your gift of \$5,000.00

Carol & Leon Beck for your gift of \$200.00

Dan & Wendy Weber for your gift of \$250.00

Richard & Ryan Heidbreder for the gift of \$5,000.00

Ralph Barker & Margaret Vandeven for your gift of \$100.00 to Pastor David and St. Paul's on behalf of granddaughter Caroline May Barker, who was Baptized Dec. 13th.

In Addition:

Thanksgiving Envelopes for the Rape and Abuse Crisis totaled \$265.00

Christmas Envelopes to date: \$1,095.00

Continued prayers for healing and comfort.

Rose Strobel, Harry Thompson, Joan Stubinger, Julie Carel, baby Jane Grimm, Vanessa Pyatt, Donna Viles, Chris Russell, Pat Collins, and Penberthy family..

Ask the Pastor

Question: Does God test us or allow us to be tested?

Answer: *"No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it." <1 Corinthians 10:13>*

The scriptures tell us God does test us or allow us to be tested. Though I would caution you to consider what that really means. Does God himself cause us pain and sorrow? I say no, if we turn to him to lead us in the right direction we will escape the torments by not following our inherent actions.

Humans, made in God's image are not marionette puppets on a string to involuntarily do God's bidding. We were given free will from the very beginning of creation to make a choice. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and were removed from the Garden of Eden. They were not killed or tortured, they were still loved by God but their actions had consequences.

God tested Abraham by instructing him to sacrifice his only son Isaac and when Abraham was about to plunge the knife into his son, God stopped him and provided a way out, a ram caught in a thicket. God allowed Satan to torment Job because God had faith in Job's righteousness and although Job suffered at the hands of Satan, it was never so much that he would deny God. God is never the cause of misery, that comes from the world where Satan is lurking to pull us away from God and do evil's bidding instead. Daily we are given choices to God's will or Satan's will and we are free to choose.

Sometimes this choice is difficult because the temptation to sin is made to look so appealing by being gift wrapped in fancy paper and bows. We let ourselves believe that a package made to look so beautiful can only be good. But once we open Pandora's box it can be nearly impossible to close. But only nearly. The scripture from 1 Corinthians ends with the words, "with the testing [God] will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."

When you turn completely to God and allow him to do his good work through you by the Holy Spirit and in the name of his Son, Jesus the Christ, it is NOT impossible to forsake the evil ways of the world and be led back into the light of his truth.

It is our God given 'free will' that causes our testing and it is our faith and trust in God that gets us through it to the light on the other side.

Blessings to you,
Pastor David

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The meeting will be January 17, 2021 directly following worship service. This is planned to be held via WebEx as a Virtual Meeting. If you do not have internet service or your service is too poor, you will also be able to attend with a telephone connection. If neither of these options work for you, please contact Council President Zola Finch or Pastor David for other possible options. You can use this link to join the meeting by using the downloaded App or and use your browser instead of downloading WebEx:

[LINK](#)

Instructions will also be sent to you by email to login to the meeting.

Congregational Council Meeting, December 14, 2020

Respectfully submitted by Becky Weber, Church Council Secretary

A Congregational Council meeting was called to order by President Zola Finch at 6:10pm on Monday December 14, 2020 in the church basement with social distancing in compliance with Covid 19 guidelines. Present were council members Zola Finch, Kathy Meller, Dan Tschirgi, Delores Vlach, Mitch Plochberger, Laurie Koestner and Becky Weber. Also present were Pastor David Viles, and Council Treasurer Kay Pascoe. Absent was Paula Linsenbardt and Scott Soell.

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Pastor David, followed by a devotion on 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Paul spoke these words to the Corinthians, and encountered many troubles during his preaching, but his light from God brought him through them. Our Church Council members have also struggled through troubles and dark times while making hard decisions regarding our church services. This is the first time in the history of this current building we've had to endure a pandemic. Pastor adds he doesn't doubt this is the first time our church doors have been closed for months at a time. We are not alone, as many other church councils in our nation and around the world have had to make similar decisions. Pastor David shared with us he believes our decisions came not from our own insight, but rather through what Paul referred to as the unseen, the Holy Spirit. We have chosen to listen to God in caring for His children and ourselves. Pastor reflected that as this year ends, he praises God for his council members and the good work performed in the name of our Lord, Jesus the Christ. He prays God continues to strengthen and encourage council members in what lies ahead as we lead our congregation to the light of Christ at the end of this time of shadows.

President Finch called for approval of the previous council meeting minutes. A motion to approve was made by Dan Tschirgi, seconded by Kathy Meller, and passed via voice vote.

President Finch called on Council Treasurer Kay Pascoe to give the treasurer's report. After discussion, it was decided Christmas offerings this year will be divided among Oaks Indian Center, Heisinger Home, Habitat for Humanity and Samaritan Center.

Pastor David reported a total of 12 miles for the month of November, and wishes to donate the cost. We thank Pastor David for this donation. Pastor David reported the following activities for November 2020: Worship and Music meeting, Church Council meeting, Osage Conference Zoom Meeting, City Council, and Lions Club. Pastor performed six home visits, four office visits, and multiple conversations, counseling and phone calls to church members. Pastor held three First Communion classes, three adult bible studies, assisted with the November election, Food Bank in Russellville, one Baptism and created, emailed and post mailed the December Epistle. Pastor performed three in person church worship services which included online broadcasts using Facebook Live, two online only services using Facebook Live, two communion and three non-communion services, one communion Sunday included First Communion for five children. Pastor also performed three mid-week online pastoral messages using Facebook Live.

President Finch called for the Standing Committee Reports which are included below.

Evangelism: Delores Vlach reports she and her committee are working on sending out Christmas cards to our church members since we have been away from each other during our church shutdown due to Covid 19.

Technology: Dan Tschirgi reports work is being done on acquiring FM radio transmission of our church services. Dan also requests additional volunteers to video services.

Worship & Music: Kathy Meller recognized and offered thanks to Pastor David, and President Finch for all their hard work towards our worship and the special services. She reports we have moved to setting three for December, and the January 2021 hymns have been selected.

Parish Education: Laurie Koestner reports she delivered fourteen Christmas shoe boxes to Concord Baptist Church drop off. She reports Sunday School classes will continue to be suspended until in person church services resume.

Church Improvement: Mitch Plochberger reports the outside dusk to dawn light post work is complete. He gave an update on the bids towards the parsonage roof repair.

Stewardship and Finance: Paula Linsenbardt, absent. No report.

Mutual Ministry: Scott Soell, absent. Pastor David reported on term limits regarding years of service on Mutual Ministry. After discussion, President Finch called for a motion to suspend the section C13.04 Mutual Ministry Committee term limit to allow Mutual Ministry members to serve an additional term; this continuing resolution to extend to December 2022. A motion was offered by Laurie Koestner, seconded by Delores Vlach, and passed via voice vote.

Old Business: President Finch reports we will continue with our current Covid 19 procedures. President Finch reports Cross Training of paid staff positions is currently on hold. No report on Security camera.

New Business: President Finch reports the committee reports are due December 15, 2020. The annual meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2021 and current plans are to hold the meeting virtually.

President Finch called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Mitch Plochberger, seconded by Kathy Meller, and passed via voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm
Pastor closed the meeting with The Lord's Prayer.

Mobile Food Pantry: Audrey Bunch

The Mobile Food Pantry was held December 8th, serving 135 families with 363 people in those families. This month the St. John's Lutheran Youth Group donated miscellaneous canned and boxed food items to be given out with the monthly food from the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri. A big thank you to all that donated. Some of the items given out this month: tea, chips, Zinger cakes, frozen ground chuck and frozen chicken breasts, alfredo sauce, milk, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, and tomatoes. The volunteers from the Lohman Lions Club were Gary and Alberta Zumwalt, and from St. Paul's were Rosemary Heidbreder and Dan Tschirgi. Next mobile Food Truck January 12th at 1:30 P.M.

Fruendschaft Gruppe – Jeannette Fischer

Because of the virus, our gruppe has not been able to meet for many months. However, limited Advent and Christmas decorating was still accomplished. Les and Kathryn Linsenbardt put up the outdoor greenery and the Christmas tree near the highway. Abbie and Stan Linsenbardt connected the lights above the church doors. Pastor Viles did the heavy lifting and carried the Christmas Tree over from the parsonage basement, erected it and also trimmed the very top section. Marie Scheperle, Les and Kathryn Linsenbardt, Gus and Jeannette Fischer completed the Advent decorations and finished trimming the tree. Thanks to all of these faithful servants for their work to beautify our sanctuary and outdoor spaces.

WELCA – Marlene Carlson

We were able to hold our annual blanket tacking days before the pandemic hit and completed 36 blankets. 4 blankets were given to a family in Russellville who suffered a house fire, 14 were given to an ELCA Church in Nashville to be distributed to people where homes were destroyed by a tornado, and the remaining 18 were sent to Lutheran World Relief.

During the year donations of 187 lbs. of food were given to Samaritan Center and there continues to be a box downstairs to give food to the Samaritan Center at any time throughout the year.

Of course, we were not able to hold our Annual Chili Supper or Cookie Day Sale, but we were so blessed to receive donations of \$4,260. Because of your generosity we have been able to support many ministries throughout our state and local areas. They include Food Bank of Central MO, Lohman/Russellville Fire Department, Cole R-I Care Fund, Healing House, Lohman Community Corp, Samaritan Center, Salvation Army, Prison Patch, and Rape 'n Abuse Crisis Center.

Also received was \$1,260.00 in the Thankoffering envelopes which were provided in November. These funds were sent on to help support ongoing Ministries of the church-wide women's organization.

The WELCA Board has decided not to hold our Annual Meeting in January this year. Instead, we will wait til things become safer for everyone so that we can do this in person. We are still in need of a President and Vice President and we prayerfully ask that you consider becoming more involved with this organization.

We are so very blessed at St. Paul's to have such a generous and loving church family. It is through you that we are able to work together to benefit so many in our community.

Baptism

Caroline May Barker is the daughter of Matt and Wendy Barker. She was born on September 2, 2020.

This sweet little angel was baptized on December 13, 2020 and was just perfect throughout the whole service.

Caroline was wearing the same baptismal gown her mother Wendy wore during her baptism on April 14, 1991 which was 29 years, 7 months, and 29 days before her daughter Caroline was baptized. The gown was made by Wendy's mother and Caroline's grandmother Becky Weber.

Due to Covid restrictions only Caroline's family and a handful of others were present for the baptismal sacrament. But you can be sure Caroline received a lot of hands on attention, especially her Pastor David who was thrilled. This was also recorded on Facebook live and can be viewed at this [BAPTISM LINK](#)

