

EPIS⁺LE



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

Volume 67 No. 1

January - 2023

Pastor's Message

"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:10-11

January 6th is the day we celebrate Epiphany. The Christ child has been born, and the 12 days of Christmas ended on the 5th. It is on this day of Epiphany that Jesus becomes known by the Gentiles, non-Jews who have come searching for the King of Kings whose star in the sky has set.

This ends the Christmas season of the church, but it does not end the anticipation and seeking of Christ Jesus. The Magi continued looking for baby Jesus until they finally found him, no longer in a manger but a house with Mary, his mother. They knelt down and worshiped him, then gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Jesus would grow to be the one who saved the world through his death on a cross and resurrection from a tomb. Today, many people continue to seek the Lord our God and finding him, worship him. They and you who know him receive his treasure of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. Now, knowing Christ Jesus, the Son of God, we seek him again in his return to call us up and take us to a place he has prepared for us in his Kingdom.

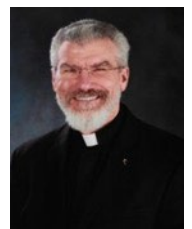
Ask The Pastor

Question: Who is Esther in the Bible?

Answer: "He had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his cousin, for she had neither father nor mother; the young woman was fair and beautiful, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter." Esther 2:7

Esther is the 17th book in our Bible's Old Testament. It tells the story of a young, beautiful woman who, with many others was brought to King Ahasuerus, of Persia who ruled from India to Ethiopia. The women were presented to the King to become his new wife and Queen. Esther is chosen but withholds her identity as a Jew. When the King's advisors persuade King Ahasuerus to destroy all the Jews in the known world. Esther, now the new Queen tells the King she too will have to be killed since she is a Jew. King Ahasuerus changes his mind and helps the Jews prevent those who would kill them. The book of Esther is filled with many conspiracies, twists, and turns and is both interesting and fun to read. It is only ten short chapters and I encourage you to read it.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,
Pastor David

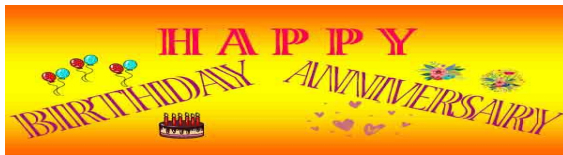


JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 6 Misty Schroeder
- 7 Ellie Kay Morgans
- 8 Brooke Steele
- 9 Marshall Griffin
- 10 Jenetia Gibler
- 10 Colin Walters
- 11 Lucas Carrel
- 16 Sherrie Hanks
- 20 David Russell
- 21 Kathy Meller
- 27 Briar Deaver
- 30 Kaitlyn Finch

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Month/Day	Attendance Phys./Virtual	Offering
DECEMBER 04	74 / 159	\$ 2,828.00
DECEMBER 11	67 / 66	\$ 3,138.00
DECEMBER 18	78 / 72	\$ 2,588.00
DECEMBER 24	105 / 100	\$ 4,701.75



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 14 Kendall & Hope Stubinger 2006

Continued prayers for:

*Virginia Linhardt, Vanessa Pyatt,
Donna Viles, Julie Carel, and Jahanna
Koestner*

Additional Income:

Christmas Offering Envelope: \$440.00 to date.

To be divided 3 ways with Oaks Indian Center, River City Habitat for Humanity, and Samaritan Center.

Christmas Treats Envelope: \$150.00 to date.

Reformation Envelopes: \$244.00 to date.

Warm Wishes and Greetings with thanks for offerings from:

Glenda Kappelman & Rick Clawson - \$250.00

Dan & Wendy Weber - \$250.00

Leon & Carol Beck - \$250.00

Special Greetings also from Howard Hahn



Special Thanks to Mark Schroeder for his work installing an outside electrical box with weather proof cover on the outside wall of the church next to the front steps. We have had to use electrical cords in the past to run a freezer and fans during the Fourth of July event. Now we have a Christmas Crèche made by Dan Tschirgi who added a light to shine on the Nativity set purchased by WELCA. With Mark's expertise, we can now plug these items in with the electrical box.

Thanks also to Richard and Rosemary Heidbreder for purchasing an outdoor timer to turn on the Nativity scene light at nightfall.



We join our hearts in great sympathy with the family of Nola Fischer who passed away on November 27, 2022.

Sharron Schneiders and family, for the loss of her husband, Michael Schneiders, who passed away on December 4, 2022.

Brian Hager and family, for the loss of his mother, Lila Hager, on December 11, 2022.

We keep these families in prayer for God's grace to bring them comfort and peace.

Congregational Council Meeting, December 12, 2022
Respectfully submitted by Frank Pascoe

† A regular monthly meeting of the Congregational Council met on Monday evening, Dec. 12th at 6 pm. The meeting was called to order by President Zola Finch. Members present were Stacy Bubach, Jana Thompson, Kathy Meller, Delores Vlach, Mitch Plochberger, and Frank Pascoe. Absent were Dan Tschirgi and Laurie Koestner. Also present were Church Treasurer Kay Pascoe and Pastor David Viles.

† The meeting opened with a prayer by Pastor Viles. The President called for approval of the previous Council minutes of Nov. 14th. This was done upon a motion offered by Jana Thompson, seconded by Delores Vlach and approved by all.

The President then requested Church Treasurer Kay Pascoe to present key points of the past month's expenditures and income. The Treasurer distributed a four-page summary of the Church's financial position. It was noted that \$40,000 from the WELCA organization has been received. Questions about the current state of basement remodeling expenditures were asked. No sums exceeding current expectations were noted.

† The President asked Pastor Viles to present his November activities report. His report detailed ten various meetings, eight individual home and outside meetings, and several counseling sessions. He participated in the Hanging of the Greens, set-up for STARS, prepared the WELCA Thankoffering Service, held Thanksgiving Eve service, and confirmed Mandy Miller and Mattson Stoermer, among other pastoral duties. Bulletins for four November Sunday services were prepared, and the December Epistle was created. His mileage for Nov. 1 to Dec. 12 totaled 218 miles for a sum of \$136.00. The reimbursement for this was approved by the Council upon a motion offered by Mitch Plochberger, seconded by Frank Pascoe, and approved by all.

The President then called upon the various Council Chairpersons to report on their activities:

Evangelism: Delores Vlach reported that the sign-up sheet for 2023 Sunday Fellowship Coffee events is going up on the Bulletin Board in the narthex. She encouraged the Council and the entire congregation to consider sponsoring and hosting these delightful events. Our fellowship hours will be somewhat delayed due, of course, to the basement remodeling. We may have to skip the January 2023 event which in the past has featured Christmas cookies. And later events may have to be held off until Feb/March.

Technology: Dan Tschirgi texted a report which noted that Pastor Viles has a new microphone headset. There was some minor microphone cutting- out on last Sunday's service. This problem is being addressed. Most viewer comments concerning the online service reception have been very positive. The choir hymns are not being heard online, however, due to the lack of microphones being hand-held or positioned near-by.

Worship & Music: Kathy Meller reported her committee met on Dec. 6th and expressed thanks for how well the Thankoffering service went. Thanks to Erika Gerth, Marie Scheperle and Pastor Viles for their work on that event. The new handbell event is progressing, and the children and adults seemed to enjoy the practice very much. The children will perform with handbells on Sunday the 18th of December. The Sunday morning service will continue to use Setting Three until Lent commences on Feb. 22d. Kathy thanked Kathryn and Les Linsenbardt for the wonderful poinsettias and their splendid arrangement around the altar. There were 38 individual plants in all. The choir will continue to sing each December Sunday. The Christmas Eve service will be at 6:30 on the 24th. There will be a regular service on Sunday the first of January 2023. Delores Vlach suggested that the offertory music titles might be included in each Sunday bulletin. President Finch will consider the possibility of including some titles each Sunday.

Parish Education: Laurie Koestner's report was sent via e-mail. Laurie reported that attendance during Children's Church has remained at 4 to 5 students. Laurie indicated that a second adult

volunteer might be beneficial for grades K-2d and for 3-5th. On Sunday Dec. 4th the practice sessions using the new handbells donated by church members began. Again on Dec. 11th, some children and adults practiced with the bells after church services in the sanctuary. The group will perform "Away in A Manger" on Sunday, Dec. 18th during Sunday worship services. There will be no Children's Church on Sunday, January 1, 2023. There were no Youth meetings during November. The youth helped the younger members make Christmas ornaments on Dec. 11th. A bowling event and supper are planned for the Lutheran Youth Organization for January 15th. More details will come later.

Church Improvement: Mitchell Plochberger and Council members briefly discussed the electrical problems experienced on Sunday Dec. 11th. Certain electrical circuits at the front of the church were out. Mitch will discuss this with the Matt Bridges workers and hopes to resolve the issue. Possible problems with epoxy work in the basement and of its strong smell drifting upstairs was discussed. It is hoped all epoxy work can be completed early in each work week and its effects be gone by a Sunday. The placement of new water heaters in the basement was discussed. A possible use of the overhead lighting units which will be taken down in the basement was mentioned. Twenty or so units might be offered to anyone who might have a use for them.

Stewardship & Finance: Stacy Bubach reported that a question of how to distribute our annual Christmas offerings might be resolved differently this year. Because Heisinger Bluffs Retirement Home has been sold to a for-profit organization and no longer has its long-held Benevolence Fund, most our annual Christmas Offerings will be divided among the three recipients listed on page seven of the Church Directory. Certain funds would now go to Oaks Indian Center, River City Habitat, and The Samaritan Center alone. Any funds remaining can be decided upon later. This proposal was agreed to by the Council upon a motion offered by Jana Thompson, seconded by Kathy Meller, and agreed to by all. Emergency Funds for the indigents or special needs persons was briefly discussed. Pastor maintains a small fund for this purpose.

Mutual Ministry: Jana Thompson presented examples, which are primarily Church Use policies, of changes in the Church Handbook made by her committee at the November meeting. A revised method for Church staff evaluations will be shared with the entire Congregation at the annual congregational meeting to be held on January 22, 2023. A final change to the Church's alcohol use policy was made. The "Alcohol & Tobacco" use policy now reads: "St. Paul's is a smoke-free and alcohol-free facility in its main levels, balcony, and playground [with the exception of wine distributed during Holy Communion]. Alcohol in the basement of the Church will be at the Church Council's or Pastor's discretion, with prior permission required". She also presented several changes to the Church Use Policies dealing with scheduling, fees, use of the Reception Hall, the former parsonage, and wedding fees. Jana reported that the Time & Talent survey sheets have been distributed and are being collected and will be tabulated soon. She reported that her committee needs two new members, although Becky Weber has agreed to fill one vacancy in 2023. Jana reported that her committee has heard several comments lamenting the fact that there will be no service on Christmas Day Sunday, neither a midnight service nor in person. Other Council members reported the same. No change in scheduling was decided, however.

Old Business: The alarm system was briefly discussed. All seems to be working. There are a few more access keys which may be distributed as needed.

New Business: The Nomination Committee has begun to search for potential new members. They will need suggestions and cajoling of the church membership to find the new Council persons for 2023. Annual Reports from Council Members are due to the Church Secretary by December 16th. The Annual Congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, January 22d.

The President called the meeting to adjournment at 7:38 pm. The Council concluded with a recitation of the Our Father.

Mobile Food Pantry: Audrey Bunch

The Mobile Food Pantry Truck came on December 13th. Weather for the afternoon was cold, windy and rainy to serve 147 families with 432 people in those families at the Trinity Lutheran church parking lot. Items served were produce boxes (beets, broccoli, grapes, lettuce, milk, parsley, potatoes, tomatoes), Bang energy drinks, frozen waffles, cheddar cheese, frozen macaroni dinners and kielbasa beef. Thanks to all the volunteers that came out to help with this community service. Volunteers from Lohman Lions Club were Gary and Alberta Zumwalt, and from St. Paul's were Rosemary Heidbreder, Dan Tschirgi and Audrey Bunch. Next Mobile Food Pantry will be January 10th, 2023. Praying for good weather.

Christmas Caroling: Kathy Meller

On the evening of December 18th, St. Paul's Christmas carolers traveled around the town of Lohman. Oh what fun we had in a 15 passenger bus driven by Harry Thompson. Pastor David prepared a caroling



bulletin book with hymn lyrics which helped immensely with our singing. Those in attendance were Gary and Audrey Bunch, Laurie and Jahanna Koestner, Kathy Meller, Marie Scheperle and her grandson Jackson, Harry and Jana Thompson, Dan Tschirgi, Pastor David Viles, and Ellen Strobel's daughter Linda Wozniak. Our adventures

took us to houses of church members as well as other community residents who were grateful that we stopped by to remember them. Candy cane treats were given out as a greeting from St. Paul's church. After singing, the group traveled out to Mark and Kathy Meller's house for pizza, many other goodies, cookies, hot chocolate, and wine. Ellen Strobel and her son-in-law Mike helped Mark with last minute preparations before the group arrived at the Mellers. A fun and festive time was had by everyone.

Freundschaft Gruppe:

Santa's helpers numbered 13 as we gathered on Saturday, December 17, to finish sanctuary decorations.



Our work did not take very long because Pastor Viles had previously carried the tree out of storage and assembled it. Kathryn had carried all the boxes of ornaments down from the bell tower and placed everything on location. Thank you, thank you.

On January 5 at 3 o'clock we will meet to take down all decorations and store everything away for another year. Afterward, we will treat ourselves to a wine, cheese and soup supper. Yes, the kitchen does not exist, but we will find a way to treat ourselves anyway.

STARS: Jeannette Fischer

We did not meet in December nor will we meet in January. However, we will resume our meetings again beginning in February. In the past, we gathered on the first Wednesday, but that date will change in 2023. Please note that the meetings will now occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. We look forward to another year of interesting programs, good food, and fellowship. Watch the church bulletin for further information.

Bells, Bells, Bells: Pastor David



Thank you Harry and Jana for the wonderful donation of Bells for children of all ages to play during our worship

services. The debut was on December 18, 2022 and if you have an internet connection you can view it on Facebook at this URL: <https://fb.watch/hFGHIsb0cQ/>

The kids had a great time and our congregation loved it. We hope to see this become an occasional event during the years to come.

Margaret Circle — Erika Gerth

The Christmas spirit was alive and well at the home of Debbie Boyce who graciously hosted Margaret Circle's December meeting! Twinkling lights guided us from our cars to the front door and into the Boyce's beautifully decorated home. Debbie provided a delicious sirloin roast, accompanied by scrumptious side dishes and desserts contributed by Margaret Circle members. What a joy to celebrate Christmas in the company of these friends! How we wished that those who couldn't make it were also present!

Christmas music is such a prominent part of this season. We played a game in which we were given phrases which gave clues to the title of Christmas songs. Example: "Oh small Israel urban center" Answer: "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem." Such fun and a good way to recall some beloved holiday songs. The evening's offering was designated to support the work of the Oaks Indian Mission in Oklahoma and Heifer International. For the complete list of organizations supported by Margaret Circle during 2022, check out our report in St. Paul's Annual Report, available soon.

Meeting dates and locations for 2023 were set; some will be held at church, others in homes. Bible study leaders for each date were also identified. Watch for specific details in the Epistle and Sunday bulletins. We look forward to another wonderful year of growing in our faith and supporting organizations who work with those in need. All women of the church and their friends are welcome!

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The meeting will be January 22, 2023 directly following worship service. You should receive a booklet of the annual reports by January 8th if all of them are submitted in time. Debbie Raithel, our church secretary has been working to get them put together as they arrive.

2023 St. Paul's Directory Deadline

It's hard to believe, but another year is in the past and another has begun. This means that we need any changes to the 2023 version of the St. Paul's Directory to be given to us by February 3, 2023 so the new Directory can be as accurate as possible. Please include any changes in postal addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, new kids in the family, marriages, name changes, etc. etc. Also, for Council Members, we need to know your committee chair assignments and committee members. Your cooperation will make a big difference in the usefulness of our Directory.

Please get any and all changes to us on or before **February 3, 2023**. Email is preferred for accuracy, but telephone will also work.

Bill & Erika Gerth, phone: 573-635-6681, email: erikagerth329@gmail.com.

Jr. Lutherans and Youth Group: Donita Stubinger



Jr. Lutherans had a great attendance of 39 with 14 Jr. Lutherans and youth enjoying a pizza party lunch with cookies, apples, grapes, mandarin oranges, soda and water in the Sunday school rooms. Parents, grandparents, and the youth group helped the younger Jr. Lutherans put together a Santa out of toilet paper rolls and a pinecone angel – I was delighted to see how much interest was taken in this Christmas project. We certainly do appreciate Ellen

Strobel for cutting out all the felt pieces for the toilet paper Santas. Ellen your help was so much appreciated. We also want to thank Angie Stubinger for making all the Angel wings. Rosemary Heidbreder we are still making use of your pinecones. Thanks to everyone for helping in any way. We could not have done it without you!

Christmas Eve Service

Our Christmas Eve service was very nice and joyfully we had 110 for the attendance. Between the extremely cold weather and the News Stations showing St. Paul's Lutheran Church canceled, without stating which church they were talking about, it was a nice surprise. Everyone enjoyed coming together to worship the Christ Child, have communion, and a candlelight service. Blessings to you all.



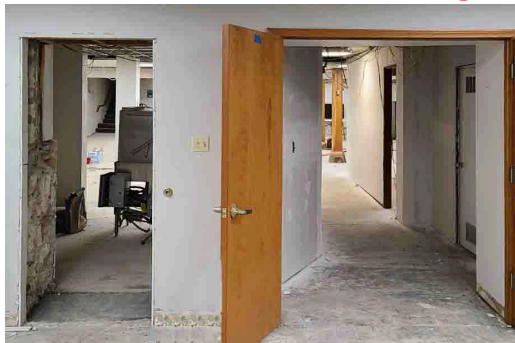
Fundraiser for Basement & Kitchen Project

\$120,000.00 Goal

\$98,900.00



GOAL



The current total received for the basement and kitchen remodel is currently at \$98,900.00. Hopes and dreams for an expanded kitchen and new equipment have been ongoing for years. Our contractor is finishing up on wall installations and painting. A new door has been added to the kitchen and the hall entrance closed off. A commercial dishwasher is in the kitchen and will make dishwashing faster. New epoxy floors will soon be installed in the kitchen and half the Fellowship hall as well as the Friendship hall and bathrooms. New ceiling tiles and LED lights have been installed and make a big difference. Please contribute whatever amount you can joyfully give. Donations can be anonymous, confidential or public.

Nativity Scene on the Hill:



A very special Thank You to Leroy Plochberger, Marie, Alan, Jackson, and Kylee Scheperle for their work erecting the large Nativity Scene on the Hill between Route D and St. Paul's church. This is an annual tradition for this family and it always looks great!

Jr. Lutherans: Donita Stubinger

We are so very thankful and grateful to Leroy Plochberger for his monetary gifts to Jr. Lutherans. Also to Marie Scheperle and Dave & Trish Russell for your contributions, it keeps our group interested and wanting to come back. We will not meet in January but will resume in February. Everyone is welcome to our group, please join us anytime.

In 2023 plans are to visit a retirement home, a veterinary museum, visit an Alpaca farm and a deer farm, go swimming, dye Easter eggs, paint pumpkins, learn about electricity, learn how to make homemade noodles, and anything else we find interesting. Please come be a part of this group.

Pastor David: Donita Stubinger, the congregation and I greatly appreciate all you do. Without your hard work and dedication, we would not have a Jr. Lutheran's program that is far and above any I have seen in other congregations I've known. You are an amazing woman filled with God's love, and you show the face of Christ to everyone you meet. We are so very thankful for your presence in and outside of our St. Paul's congregation.

Calendar of Events and Schedules

January 3rd, Tuesday: **EMAIL** Worship and Music Committee Meeting (**We will not meet at church.**)

January 5th, Thursday: Freundschaft Gruppe will take down all Christmas decorations at 3:00 p.m.

January 9th, Monday: Church Council meeting at 6:00 pm in the youth room upstairs.

January 10th, Tuesday: Food Pantry Volunteers at Trinity Lutheran in Russellville at 1:15 p.m.

January 17th, Tuesday: Basement reserved for Lohman City Council meeting at 5:30 p.m.

January 18th, Wednesday: Mutual Ministry will meet at 5:00 pm in the church basement.

January 26th, Thursday: Epistle Deadline for News and Articles.

Bulletins are normally printed on Wednesdays.

Pastor David normally plans Fridays as his day off.

Usher Schedule

Jan. - 01	Delores Vlach	Frank Pascoe
Jan. - 08	Laurie Koestner	Stacy Bubach
Jan. - 15	Kathy Meller	Mitchell Plochberger
Jan. - 22	Jana Thompson	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 29	Delores Vlach	Frank Pascoe

Acolyte Schedule

Jan. - 01	Lucas Plochberger
Jan. - 08	Mattson Stoermer
Jan. - 15	Mackenzie Linnenbrink
Jan. - 22	Oliver Stoermer
Jan. - 29	Madeline Stubinger

Greeters Schedule

Jan. - 01	Gary Elliott	Donald Weber
Jan. - 08	Audrey Bunch	Gary Elliott
Jan. - 15	Devin Koestner	Jerry Koestner
Jan. - 22	David Russell	Trish Russell
Jan. - 29	Jerry Koestner	Donald Weber

Readers Schedule

Jan. - 01	Erika Gerth
Jan. - 08	Donald Weber
Jan. - 15	Lori Meyer
Jan. - 22	Trish Russell
Jan. - 29	Devin Koestner

Song Leader

Jan. - 01	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 08	Kathy Meller
Jan. - 15	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 22	Kathy Meller
Jan. - 29	Kathy Meller

Audio / Video Technician

Jan. - 01	Roger Pennell
Jan. - 08	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 15	Roger Pennell
Jan. - 22	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 29	Dan Tschirgi

Organist / Keyboard

Jan. - 01	Kathy Meller
Jan. - 08	Zola Finch
Jan. - 15	Zola Finch
Jan. - 22	Zola Finch
Jan. - 29	Zola Finch

Communionware for the Month

Lester & Kathryn Linsenbardt

Communion Assistants

Jan. - 08	Donald Weber
Jan. - 22	Audrey Bunch

Altar Flowers for the Month

Kathryn Linsenbardt

*** Communion Days noted in Yellow**