



St. Paul's Lutheran

THE EPISTLE

January 2019

Christmas comes at a descending time. The old year is coming to an end, the new year is not yet here. It is too late to accomplish goals set on the previous New Year's Day, and just enough time to realize that whatever shape or state you are in will be the shape or state in which you end the year. There is a hefty dose of "what-might-have-been."

In the Northern Hemisphere the trees are bare, fields are barren, birds have migrated, animals are hibernating, the days are short and the nights are long. The earth's colors are muted, and when there is snow the world becomes silent. Sometimes during these short days and long nights I find myself thinking about the brevity of life. This conflicts with my tendency to believe that the possibility of self-improvement and renewal is limitless: there is always another day, more time, another chance. I remember watching our first child as she slept in her cradle, thinking about the future before her and, at the same time, the reality that there would be an end. The Ash Wednesday declaration, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," became more pointed and more poignant. The cradle-to-grave progression is our path; the inevitable decline of our strength.

"As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more" (Psalm 103:15).

Maybe this is why the Christmas season can be so fraught. Of course, there is anticipation and celebration, but there is also pressure and stress. Perhaps we are trying to greet the Lord's birth with our best efforts (when I was a girl, Christmas preparations were not complete until the silver was polished, and that job fell to me), but desperation can creep into the urgency to get Christmas right, to hold back the night. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" (ELW, 279). This is freight that Christmas can't carry when Christmas depends on us.

But Christmas also comes at an opportune time. God did not come to us that first Christmas when we were at the top of our game or when the world was perfect. Even the circumstances of Jesus' birth were a sharp reminder that all was not well – forced migration to Bethlehem, no room for the young family, born in a stall. Emmanuel – God with us – came to us and comes to us precisely at the time when our need is greatest. Our attempts to bring about perfection actually get in the way of receiving the gift. When we try to fit into an unrealistic ideal of who we ought to be instead of welcoming God into our real self, no matter how messy, then what is left on the 13th day of Christmas? Fatigue, certainly, but also the dull acceptance that life moves from cradle to grave.

On Christmas, God has reversed the cradle to grave progression. The angel announced to the shepherds:

"I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: for to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Here is the new reality. Here is the truth. Our lives are not a meaningless trudge from cradle to grave, but a joyful journey – true and lasting joy – from grave to cradle. All our brokenness and death meet life and healing and hope in the child in the manger. His cradle defeats the grave. We are loved. We are alive. Now we are free to greet this holy season.

Merry Christmas, dear church.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Birthdays

- 4 –Elaine Lucke
- 4 – Kelly Migl
- 6 – Carolyn Smith
- 10 – Phil Crawford
- 10 - Gail Salewski
- 18 – James McGee
- 23 – Jaime Parker
- 24 – Tori Rein
- 24 – Lori Viereck
- 24 – Laney Cherry
- 28 - Megan Hess
- 29 – Virginia Hackfeld
- 29 – Emily Viereck
- 30 – Robyn Soileau

Baptismal Anniversaries

- 1–Jean Carson
- 1 –Anna Maria Chauviere
- 1–Susan Clanton
- 1–Phil Crawford
- 1–Floyd Eickenhorst
- 1–Sherry Eickenhorst
- 1– Albert Elizondo
- 1–Kim Holle
- 1 –Elaine Lucke
- 1–James McGee
- 1 –Natalie Seymour
- 1–Elaine Vircant
- 8–Tanner Carter
- 10–Russell Holle
- 10–Garrett Reavis
- 10–Justin Reavis
- 10–Dalton Rein
- 11–Jaime Parker
- 11–Peyton Parker
- 12—Caroline Lucke
- 17 - Andrew Rouyer
- 21–Michelle Johnston
- 23–Kelly Migl

- 24–Carly Moreno
- 26 - Debbie Bakemeier
- 31–Hoya Ash

Serving Our Country

- Justin Giese, Kevin Gillespie
- Justin Handley, Mitchell Handley
- Amy Hoff and family, Shay Kurz
- Brandon Locha, Kaylyn Perry
- Chris Salo and family
- Sean and Hannah Zarsky

Wedding Anniversaries

- 12 - Don & Elaine Eschberger
- 25 – Kurt & Kelly Migl
- 28 – James & Jeanie Herrington

In Our Prayers

- Shannon Blue– health concerns
- Charlotte & Leon Busby-support
- Jean Carson– shut in
- Cindy Eschberger- shut-in
- Boo Boo Fojt– health concerns
- Betty Ganske- health concerns
- Virginia Hackfeld- health concerns
- Kevin Johnston– healing
- OJ Lamb– health concerns
- Jan Lorfing– health concerns
- Emily McCoy– health concerns
- Colleen & Ken Peting– health concerns
- Walter & Doris Rein- health concerns
- The Seymour Family– sympathy
- Bob Steffler- healing
- June Tieman- health concerns
- Myrtle Viereck– health concerns
- Sherry White- healing

Thank You

- To Chuck Ohm for keeping our church grounds so beautiful.

INREACH/OUTREACH NEWS

Committee Meeting, Sunday, Jan. 27th at 12pm

Golden Group News

- **Monthly Luncheon**
Tuesday, January 15th @ 11:30AM
Gringo’s Mexican Restaurant
2631 Underwood Rd, La Porte
- **Bus Trip to Smithville**
Tuesday, January 22nd
More information to follow
Sign-up sheets for both events are in the Fellowship Hall

ST. PAUL’S FOOD PANTRY KICK-OFF February 3rd

The youth will be standing at the back of the church to receive loose change as you exit after the worship service. All money collected will benefit St. Paul’s Food Pantry.

BUNCO! The last Wednesday of each month

6:30-8:30pm. Come out for an evening of ladies’ fellowship. You’ll enjoy bunco, faith, and fun. The ladies of St. Paul’s will play and pray together!

Prayer Shawl, Blanket, & Caring Cross

Blessing Sunday, January 27th

If you know of someone in need of a prayer shawl please come to the church office.



Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday January 27th

The Annual Report will be printed and ready for reading on Sunday, January 13th

Thank You St. Paul’s

Pastor Nancy, Rick, and Jada would like to thank the congregation for the Love Offering. Your generosity and love was overwhelming and much appreciated.

December Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of:

Weston Zucha (nephew of Kelly Migl)

Boobie Eickenhorst (mother of Floyd Eickenhorst)

Joyce Kubecka (sister of Rosie Haas)

Cecelia Thenemann

Fred Seymour (father of Darren Seymour)

Given By:

Susan & Rip Clanton

Tori & Dalton Rein

Kelly & Kurt Migl

Susan & Rip Clanton

Susan & Rip Clanton

Sandra & James McGee

Sandra & James McGee

Designation:

General Fund

General Fund

General Fund

General Fund

General Fund

Capital Improve

Capital Improve

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING**December 13, 2018**

Members Present: Debbie Gillespie, John Schlobohm, Kevin Johnston, Susan Clanton, Pastor Nancy Simpson, Rosie Haas, Angie Ash, Chad Davis, Kim Holle, Ian Gillespie, Birdie Torberson

Members Absent: Donna Reavis, Kurt Migl

The December Council meeting was called to order by President Debbie Gillespie at 6:30 PM. Debbie Gillespie led the group with the opening prayer and devotion.

NOVEMBER MINUTES Susan Clanton MOVED, John Schlobohm seconded, to approve the Minutes of the November 18, 2018, Council meeting. Motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT

-Pastor Nancy reported that Spanish/English conversations have begun. They are held after the Sunday service.

-No date has been determined for new members joining St. Paul's.

-The Lee College Ambassadors recently visited St. Paul's and presented the church with a homemade cross for the cross wall.

TREASURER'S REPORT

-Kim Holle distributed the Treasurer's Report for Council review. It was noted that expenses exceeded income in the amount of \$6,573.92 in November. Property and Workman's Comp Insurance, which is paid quarterly, was paid in November. St. Paul's received \$500 from the Synod for campus ministry.

-Kim presented the proposed 2019 Budget in the amount of \$233,990. Ian Gillespie MOVED, Birdie Torberson seconded, to approve the proposed budget as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

-Sixteen students are now attending the YMCA After School program

-Kevin Johnson reported that tiles in the Food Pantry room are loose and some are coming up. John Schlobohm and Kevin will check to see if anyone with Food Pantry group can re-glue the tiles.

-Discussion was held regarding the use of church facilities and the charges associated. Debbie Gillespie and Susan Clanton looked into costs and reported to Council. After Council discussion, Council recommends Fellowship Hall/Kitchen Rental Agreement be edited to reflect half-price discount for church members.

-Kevin Johnston reported that approximately 230 individuals attended the Breakfast With Santa. There was no train this year due to the weather. The children were given pencils, erasers, and candy canes, along with breakfast.

-Plans are being made for St. Paul's to attend a Lee College basketball game.

NEW BUSINESS

-The red book timeline was reviewed.

-All Annual Reports are due January 9. The Annual Congregation Meeting will be January 27, 2019.

Committee Reports –

Youth & Family/ Education—Donna and Chad have combined the Youth/Family and Education Committees. The High school room will be used for the youth. Becky Linsenbardt is in charge of the Christmas program for the children/youth.

Worship & Music—Susan Clanton reported that the Wednesday night fellowships are going well. Poinsettias have again been purchased for the sanctuary for Christmas.

Property—The date for "Fat Mac" to distribute bicycles in the church parking lot to needy children has been changed to December 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM and closed with the Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted,
Angie Ash, Secretary

PROPERTY NEWS

Committee Meeting Sunday, Jan. 6th at 11:45am

Education/Youth & Fam NEWS

Committee Meeting Sunday, Jan. 13th at 11:45am

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Women's Fellowship Meet every 2nd Wednesday of every month for fellowship, 9:30 a.m. McDonald's (corner of Garth & Baker) All women are welcome.

Men's Fellowship Meet every 2nd Saturday 8:00am at Burger King (Alexander Dr.) Enjoy breakfast, the Word, and fellowship.

WORSHIP & MUSIC NEWS

Committee Meeting Sunday, Jan. 20th at 12pm

CELEBRATING EPIPHANY Sunday, January 6th

King Cakes will be served after worship. This is the church day associated with Christ being revealed to the nations.

The Magi followed the Star and found Jesus—the Christ-Child and they worshipped him.

Baby Jesus is hidden in the cakes. The tradition is if you find Jesus in your piece of cake, you provide the king cakes next year on Epiphany.



Lee College Basketball Night Saturday, January 26th

4:30pm Meet at St. Paul's to make posters then carpool over to the Sports Arena

6:00pm Game begins
Lee Rebels vs Coastal Bend College

Admission is free. Please bring a canned good.



St. Paul's Lutheran Church- ELCA
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Web Site: www.stpaulsbaytown.org
Office Hours: 9:30AM-3:30PM, M-TH
Nursery Open



SUNDAY SCHEDULE:

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

STAFF:

Rev. Nancy Simpson, Pastor

Rick Falconi, Director of Music Ministries

Jada Hylton, Director of Office Ministries



God's work.
Our hands.

REFORMATION 500

Looking Back & Called Forward



St. Paul's Caring Cross Ministry We're starting off 2019 centered on the cross of Christ. So far, 58 crosses have been made by members and friends of St. Paul's. That's a great start! Anyone who would like to make **palm-size crosses** may do so. Make them no bigger than 2 inches by 2 inches. The crosses can be made of any durable material –yarn, wood, leather, etc. You may place your completed crosses in a plastic baggy with your name inside the bag so we know who made them, then we will make a little card to go with it. Any of us in the church could come get one or more crosses that are finished and hand them out to people as the Holy Spirit moves you. They would be for anyone who needs comfort or encouragement -a reminder of the love of Jesus Christ that they can touch and hold.

A **basket in the Fellowship Hall** awaits your Caring Cross. Your crosses will be a labor of love for others throughout the year. What a gift from the heart!

Finished crosses will be blessed along with prayer shawls and blankets on Sunday January 27th and placed in a "ready" basket ready for you and I to give out.



Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Nancy