**The Forward**

the monthly newsletter of

St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church

Newark, Ohio December 18, 2023

**Church Phone: 740-345-6115 Web Site: <**[**www.stpaulselca.org>**](file:///C:\Documents%20and%20Settings\Kerrill\My%20Documents\Forward\%3cwww.stpaulselca.org%3e)

Pastor: Martin P. Gehring Cell phone: 586.864.4004

Office Hours: M T W 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. or by appointment

Congregation Council President: Jerry Young

Office Secretary: Jodie Nickles Mon-Fri 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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**Emmanuel, God With Us**

At the risk of beginning with an overused phrase, our society is polarized these days. We are divided over global warming, the wars in Ukraine and Israel, immigration reform, healthcare reform, the national budget, reparations for slavery, gender nonconformity, gender conformity, gun control (or lack thereof), vaccinations, masking, Social Security reform, eliminating the filibuster, the flat tax rate, the estate tax, the two-party political system, cats vs. dogs … It seems that given any complex issue, we will find a way to boil it down to one all-polarizing issue.

Most often, these divides focus on *theoretical* issues – not theoretical in the sense that the issue does not exist, but in that it has little to do with *me.* Those arguing loudest about any given issue tend to be those with the least skin in the game: cisgenders argue against LGBTQ rights, those with good healthcare argue against expanding Medicare. It is amazing how having a gay son or losing one’s health insurance has a way of sobering discourse, of moving an argument into the *real* world.

At Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation, the enfleshment of our God. In holy wonder we witness again our God becoming one of us – not in thought or theory, but in actual flesh and bone. The incarnate one wastes not one moment in theoretical arguments over the best way to reform a sinner, what it means to feel true repentance, or any other such theological concerns; to its shame, such never-ending theological wrangling will distract the church for centuries to come. Rather, with a minimum of fuss, Jesus simply gets about the work of gathering the abused, excluded, scapegoated, and despairing and gently leading them into God’s new future.

We do not need a theory of salvation. We do not need a plan for reformation, we do not need empty prayers or good wishes. What we need is a God here, now, in each moment of our troubled lives. And that is exactly what we get in Jesus, Emmanuel, *“God with us.”*

A blessed Christmas to you all! Pastor Martin

**From the Council President**

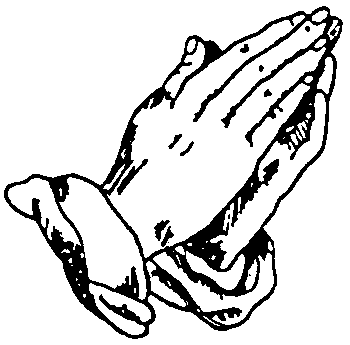
**Happy New Year…  So What’s Your New Year’s Resolution?**

Most New Year’s resolutions are blurted out casually on December 31 and broken within 48 hours after that.  Maybe that means we should take our time.

As a congregation, we do many things well… worship, music, congregational and pastoral care, fellowship, and a host of service projects from sock and mitten trees to shoe drives, food drives to funeral luncheons, Lutheran World Relief to neighborhood cleanups.  So what’s next?  That’s where we want to hear from you.  Just not yet.

Take your time.  Think about it.  At the church services on January 27 and 28, we will be asking for your ideas on a simple survey: 1 multiple choice question about possible service projects for 2024, and 1 space for you to enter any new suggestions of your own.  This is not a formal vote and it's certainly possible the results could be 'all of the above.' Our goal is just to engage your creativity, find out where the interest and energy are, and see if there are ideas nobody has yet shared.  Council will discuss the results at their meeting on January 29 and then share them with the congregation.

Thanks. *Jerry Young, Council President*

**Please keep the following people in your prayers** Margaret Marx, Laura Cooperider, Jackie Casto, Jack Metcalf, Susan Wagenheim

Ongoing: *The families and friends of Ruth Swinehart and Pastor Betsy and Matthias Young.*

***If you need an address for anyone or wish to add someone to the list, please call the office.***

**THE WHEN’S AND THE WHERE’S – let the office know if something needs to be added to the list below!**

**PASTOR’S OFFICE HOURS - Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday**

**9 a.m. to 2 p.m. or by appointment.**

* **SERVICES THE WEEKEND OF CHRISTMAS EVE**: Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, there will be no Sunday morning worship. And so that we can all join together as one community on this important night, there will be no Saturday service on Dec. 23rd. **Services will be held at 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Sunday the 24th.**
* **Sunday School for all ages 9 a.m. see Ruth Graham for details.**
* **Tuesday Lessons –** A discussion led by Pastor Martin of the lessons to be read for the coming weekend. Starts at 5:30 p.m. in Weisgerber Lounge. **They will not meet Tuesday December 26th (**the Tuesday after Christmas**.)**
* **Friday Night Game Nights –**meets on the 3rd Friday nights at 7 p.m. in Weisgerber Lounge! Interested? Bring a favorite game and come join the fun!
* **The Land of Legend Fly Fisherman** meet in Danford Hall on the second, third and fourth Mondays of each month at 7 p.m.
* **ST. PAUL’S BOOK CLUB** meets the third Monday evening of each month at 7 p.m. in Weisgerber Lounge. For January our selection will be The Choice by Edith Eger (nonfiction).
* **AA** meets every Saturday morning at 11 a.m. in Danford Hall and on Tuesdays and Fridays at noon.
* **NA** meets on Friday evenings at 7 p.m. in Danford Hall.
* **Friday Fellowship Bible Study** meets every Friday morning at 10 a.m. in Weisgerber Lounge.
* **Ruth Circle meets next on January 10th at 10:00 a.m.** in Danford Hall.
* **Church Council will meet January 29th at 7 p.m.**
* **Matthew’s Kitchen** meets on the 2nd Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.
* **Grief Group** meets on the 2nd Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. They meet next on January 10th.

**Notes to the Church and Congregation:**

**RESULTS OF THE CONGREGATION VOTE:** All three items passed the congregation vote; the 2024 budget has been approved, the spending limit requiring congregation approval has been raised from $2500 to $5000, and Greta Blegvad, Jerry DePalmo and Jim Rengert have been elected to council for three year terms.

**THE CHILDREN’S CHOIR** meets in the chapel after worship on  the second and fourth Sundays of the month. All children are  welcome! For more information, please contact Juli Rauch  at jrauch248@gmail.com or (740) 405-8833

**The Annual Report:** If you have something that needs to be in the Annual Report, please have your information to the church office (email is preferable) no later than Tuesday January 9th. Thanks!

**VOICE AND BELL CHOIRS** meet Wednesday evenings: 6:30p-7:30p (Bells) and 7:30p-8:30p (Choir). These ensembles are open to  everyone. Call, text, or email Dustin with any questions (740-258- 4335, dustinhilltenor@gmail.com).

**HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN COMMUNITY DROP-IN CENTER:**  As the weather gets colder, more volunteers are needed for the  Community Drop-In Center. It is a 2.5 hour commitment, but  adjustments can be made to suit volunteer schedules. Sign up at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084EA5A722A0F9C07- trinity#/ or by calling Trinity Lutheran.

**SHUT-INS –** If you are in need of pastoral care, a friendly visit, or would like communion brought to your home, please contact the office and leave a message with Jodie between the hours of 10 and 2. Thanks!

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME** to experience the fellowship we offer by joining us in the lobby of the educational building each week. A sign up is available for those who can help provide goodies. Coffee donations are always appreciated.

**FOOD PANTRY NEWS!** The food pantry collection barrel is currently located across from the office. ***The needs for this month are any foods that can be prepared by a child. Peanut butter and jelly, ramen noodles, mac and cheese cups, etc. Please no clothing items.*** As always, all donations are welcome. If you wish to give a monetary donation, mark your offering envelope designated to the “Food Pantry”.

**ARE YOU GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE? –** The Grief Group meets on the 2nd Wednesdays at 1:30 in Danford Hall. If you would like more information, please contact Jean Hovland. The group **meets next on Jan. 10th.**

**January Anniversaries**

1 - David & Marilyn Doll (54)

Andrew & Courtney Swisher (11)

2- Martin & Ruth Gehring (36)

12 - Ken & Kelly Green (37)

14 - Donald & Katie Miller (58)

18 - Corey & Brooke Love (21)

**January Birthdays**

1 - Brin Fulton

Chuck King

2 - Carmella Holman

Jean Hovland (82)

Sofia Swisher-

Morris

3 - David Graham

Christian Thacher

4 - Caroline King

5 - John A. Jordan

6 - Kelsey Stanley

8 - Chance Settles

10 - Linda Crawmer

Ariel Hall

Ian Jordan

Hydi Laidlaw-

Smith

12 - Larissa Fuller

Lyric Wilson

13 - Al Miller

14 - Harry Simon

15 -Rachel Freytag Cox

Bradley Pastorius

Olivia Pastorius

16 - Sam Irvin

17 - April Frazee

18 - Aidan Fraley

19 - Ron Howard

21 - Crystal Stamper

Samantha Woolard

22 - Kira Coad-Pope

Adam Hall

23 - Johanna Hartfield

Belinda Seabright

24 - Carol Sunkle (95)

27 - Reece Dupler

28 - Tim Grigsby

Faith Settles

31 - Diane Ganz

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*****Christmas Eve Services***

***The family Christmas Eve Service will be at 4 p.m.***

***The Christ Mass will begin at 10 p.m.***

**Sunday Volunteers for January 2024**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Position** | **Jan 7** | **Jan 14** | **Jan 21** | **Jan 28** |
| **Cantor** | Ruth Gehring | Tim Jordan | Juli Rauch | Dustin Hill |
| **Lector** | Shirley Campbell | Addison Laidlaw-Smith | Dick Daly | Dick Shiels |
| **Com.**  **Assistant** | Sadie Smith | Diana Koch | Anne Daly | Greta Blegvad |
| **Usher** | Fred Freytag, Charles Cooperider, Steve Wiersma | Charlie Laidlaw-Smith, Charles Cooperider | Greg Everingham, John Grangaard | Don Miller, Jerry Young,  Charles Cooperider |
| **Counters** | Fred & Lindsay Freytag, Sally Finck | Julie Lamp,  Kerrill Foster | Sally Finck, Greg & Kim Everingham | Kerrill Foster  Don Miller |

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**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Received 11/5/2023 Year to Date Attendance

Current $ 9,845.00 $145,949.94 Sat. 4 p.m. 11

Benevolence 45.00 4,445.00 Sun. 10 a.m. 60

Total $9,890.00 $ 150,394.91 Total 71

Received 11/12/2023 Year to Date Attendance

Current $ 5,709.64 $151,659.55 Sat. 4 p.m. 9

Benevolence 25.00 4,470.00 Sun. 10 a.m. 68

Total $5,734.64 $ 156,129.55 Total 77

Received 11/19/2023 Year to Date Attendance

Current $ 2,710.00 $154,369.55 Sat. 4 p.m. 13

Benevolence 95.00 4,565.00 Sun. 10 a.m. 60

Total $2,805.00 $ 158,934.55 Total 73

Received 11/26/2023 Year to Date Attendance

Current $ 1,557.00 $155,926.55 Sat. 4 p.m. 8

Benevolence 15.00 4,580.00 Sun. 10 a.m. 62

Total $1,572.00 $ 160,506.55 Total 70

*Donations were made to the Memorial Fund in memory of* ***Ruth Swinehart*** *by Diane Ganz, Terry & Karen Nelson, Mark & Sally Finck, Mary & Micheal Manolaff, Valerie & Jim Kaler, and Judy Seabright. A donation was made to the Memorial Fund in memory of* ***Pastor Betsy*** *by Terry & Karen Nelson.*

*Thank you Thrivent Choice members, for your donations to St. Paul’s!*

***Thrive! Campaign $36,375 Pledged $9,161 Paid in 2023***

***$20,969 paid in total. $15,226 outstanding pledges***

Income for Operations as of October 31, 2023 $144,691.08

Total Operating Expenses as of October 31 2023 -203,137.37

**Deficit** **($ 58,446.29)**

**SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

**Traditional Worship**

**10 a.m.**

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**SATURDAY WORSHIP**

**4 p.m. year-round**

*“The Mission of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to* ***SHARE****, at all times and with all people, the Good News of* ***GOD'S GRACE****, through*

***CHRIST JESUS.****”*

**THE FORWARD December 18, 2023 Non-Profit Organization**

**St. Pauls Ev. Lutheran Church U.S. POSTAGE PAID**

**67 North Fifth Street Newark, OH 43055**

**Newark, OH 43055-5031 Permit Number 117**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**