



SAINT PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

MESSENGER

HARVESTIDE 2022

A SPECIAL INVITATION

The Upstate New York Synod has requested Council consider a proposal for joint ministry with St. Timothy's in Geneseo beginning next summer. Pastor Jonathan Diebler, the Conference Dean, will preside and preach at worship on October 23rd. Afterwards, he will facilitate a congregational *conversation* to fully inform you of the proposal and answer questions.

Although this is not an official congregational meeting, the conversation we have together will be very important since it will inform Council's deliberations going forward. Any decision reached by Council thereafter will be officially communicated to you. Any changes would be officially addressed at the Annual Meeting in January.

Between pastoral changes and the pandemic, we have effectively been in transition since 2018. Like many other churches, we have important decisions to make to ensure vitality of Christian mission and ministry going forward. Therefore, the conversation we have on the 23rd is very important to the future of St. Paul's. Please make every effort to attend.

If you are receiving the Living Lutheran magazine, the year's subscription for church members who order through St. Paul's ended September 30. If you want to renew your subscription through the church, please submit a check for \$8.95, made payable to St. Paul's with Living Lutheran in the memo line ASAP! For those members who do not receive this informative magazine, the Church receives 2 extra copies that are placed on top of the mailboxes in the hall. Take one home - you might want to subscribe.

“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.”

(Luke 9:62)

You have heard me say that on occasion. Perhaps more than once. Jesus challenges would be followers who make excuses for why they cannot immediately follow him with this summary statement. It helps to remember that plowing, whether in those days or now, requires an eyes-front approach. You must see where you are going or disaster will ensue.

The call to look ahead remains salient because we frequently want to look behind in many aspects of our lives. We look back to what we remember as a simpler time. Maybe we have a fond relationship that is now lost to us and remembering helps relieve anxiety about the present. That old job was easier; maybe the pay was better. Perhaps health was better. There are many such examples of why the past may be joyfully remembered, especially when the future is uncertain or scary.

The trouble is, the past is precisely that, in the past. We cannot relive it. We cannot recreate it. We can only go forward. To attempt to recreate or reimpose the past on the future forces us to lie to ourselves about what the past was and what the future must be. That leaves us unprepared and even resentful when the real future comes knocking.

Churches everywhere are facing what we are facing. Overall membership has been declining for decades. The habit of Americans to join anything, much less a church, has long been on the wane. Just ask your local Rotarians or Lions, the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. The culture of the 21st century is not a joining culture. It is a consuming culture that *acquires* connections with other individuals and groups based on affinities and identity, but no longer obligation. Hence the phenomenon of over half the country *identifying* as Christian, but nowhere near that number finds its way into the pews.

When faced with this, no wonder we are tempted to look back to a time when the pews were full, and the church calendar was packed with programming. Then the next thing we do is consider what we did for those things to be, and one person suggests reviving an old event that long ago fizzled out; someone else suggests a version of old fashioned values; another suggests a different approach to

political beliefs. Then conflict ensues and more people vote with their feet (or perhaps their beds, as they opt to sleep in on Sunday morning).

Thus for many in this country, the church has become yet another service to be selectively consumed on a strictly as desired basis. It ends up competing with school extracurricular activities for children, with recreation for adults, with other nonprofits for community service, and with mass media for hearts and minds. Sometimes, the church is not another consumer good, but one more thing to do in an already busy life.

We must remember that first and foremost the Church is a *community* related to God through Jesus Christ. This community hears and reads the Word of God and reflects that word into the community that others may hear the Good News. This community is not by our own merit perfect but by God’s grace forgiven and restored to fulness of life. This community worships God in gratitude and serves Jesus Christ as we serve other people in need.

What the church is *not* is a club or a service organization. The church is not a collection of things to do but rather *people who believe*. No other organization can offer what the church *must* offer: the Word of God proclaimed, the Sacrament celebrated, or the Great Commission fulfilled by each of us with God’s help.

So look FORWARD. Let the past be the past, and look to where God is calling you and Saint Paul’s. The culture of *now* needs the witness of the church, the culture of the past has gone on to its reward and cannot be resurrected no matter how good that might make us all feel. The only resurrection that should concern us is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being raised appeared to his disciples in a form that was familiar yet also new. (Lk. 24.13-35)

Keep this in mind as you discern and converse at the gathering on October 23rd. Feel free, truly free, to be frank with your feelings. Have trust, genuine trust, in your fellow church members, so you and listen completely to what others say. Embrace God so fully that you can speak to the future without being overwhelmed by regret or nostalgia from the past. Then look ahead and see God with you making all things new.

- Pr. Eric

LAUNDRY LOVE UPDATE

As most of you are aware, St. Paul's received a 3-year World Hunger Grant of \$11,000 from the ELCA in 2018 to sponsor Laundry Love 4 times a month at the Family Laundromat on Franklin Street. Also as part of this grant, the "Moms and Babies" program was given funds to reach out to new moms and provide them with information on how to use non-disposable diapers. The grant paid for Penny Leven's time and supplies for the new moms who wanted to work with Penny on how to buy, use and wash non-disposable diapers. Each new mom was able to select 24 cloth diapers with snaps that could be used until the child was potty trained. The "Moms and Babies" part of the grant has been completed, but the completion of the Laundry Love grant was not expended in the 3-year period due to covid. ELCA extended the timeline for the grant's completion to January 2023.

Currently, Laundry Love serves 10-15 families at each session, using \$100-\$125 in quarters for each session. Ann Myers, and her team of 4 volunteers, have also met out of the ordinary needs of area residents. One single mother recently needed to wash several large bags of bedding and clothing for her family that had been in storage in a garage due to homelessness. A home and job had been secured and the family was trying to return to normalcy. Another family needed to wash all of their bedding as their home had been fumigated. Our volunteers met these extraordinary needs outside of our normal monthly dates.

The funds received from ELCA in 2018 will be depleted in late November/early December. Ann has applied for another grant from the ELCA, but will not learn until November if she will receive a grant. If a grant is awarded, the funds will not be sent until February.

The Church Council is hoping to continue Laundry Love as long as we can after the current grant funds are totally expended, especially during the time between December and February if we are notified that we have received another grant. Council is asking that you consider making an extra donation to this mission. If you do make an extra donation, please mark "Laundry Love" in the memo area of your check or include a note in your envelope that your donation is to be used toward Laundry Love.



Family Laundromat 20 Franklin St.

Oct. 22	8:30 - 11:30
Oct. 24	3:30 - 6:30
Nov. 5	8:30 - 11:30
Nov. 7	3:30 - 6:30
Nov. 19	8:30 - 11:30
Nov. 21	3:30 - 6:30

IN OUR PRAYERS

Judy Babcock	Jim Lewis
Lindsey Backus	Michelle Mackey
Carolyn Baker	William Maher
Jan Blum	Bob & Betty Minemier
Ginger Buck	Barb Mitchell
Maya Buckley	Jim Rex
Rodney Button	Dick Sahrle
Bill Caton	Mary Sahrle
June Collier	Bill Shaver
Don & Madge Cuddeback	David Smith
Kim Greene	Chris
Michael	Jim Thompson
Jan Hawk	Jim Wagner
Kay Howe	Peter Vogt
Dick & Marilyn Lemen	

SERVING IN THE MILITARY

- ★ Andrew M. Mountzouros
United States Navy
- ★ Jordan C. Camacho
United States Navy

October & November Birthdays

Christine Whiteman 10/19
Diane Mountzouros 10/26
Jim Wagner Nov 1
June Collier Nov 24
Wilma Traxler Nov 29

**REFORMATION SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 30TH!**

**WEAR RED TO CHURCH
COFFEE HOUR TO FOLLOW**