



Proclamation

April 2014

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St. Paul's
Lutheran
Church

Inside this issue:

St. Paul's As A Missional Church	1
Sunday School	3
What Family Do you Belong to?	3
Choir News	3
Letters to the Congregation	4
SpringYard Sale	5
Vacation Bible School	5
April Calendar	6

St. Paul's As A Missional Church

April 2014

By Tim McNutt

As you may have heard, recently my family and I had the opportunity to move closer to St. Paul's. There were a number of motives for this move. The biggest reason was to be closer to all of you and therefore to be closer to our ministry base in Southern Maryland.

How one pastors a church is rapidly changing. Once upon a time, America was at least a 'Christian-ized' nation. People connected with local churches more easily. People accepted a general belief in God and knew their behavior counted against eternity. Those days are gone.

Recently a number of my family have been looking forward to Awesome Con comic book convention coming to Washington DC later in April. That's no big deal. Comic books have been around for a long time. But it's scheduled for April 18-20. Do you understand the significance of those dates? This huge event is scheduled over Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Resurrection Sunday.

Don't get me wrong. They don't need to change their dates for me. The promoters are free to pick whatever dates they choose. Nor am I advocating any special government protectionism.

What concerns me is the reasoning behind the choice of the promoters, staff and vendors. While it's an assumption on my behalf, these dates seem to indicate the promoters have little concern for Good Friday or Easter Sunday. Little concern for those days possibly means little concern for Jesus and the Gospel. This essay is not an act of critical judgment, but an act of regret that perhaps Jesus Christ is a forgotten or unknown person in their lives and so this weekend may mean nothing to them.

Organizations today schedule all sorts of events no matter the day or time. What concerns me is the reasoning why they would set soccer, baseball or other activities as greater priorities over worship and spiritual formation in Jesus Christ. Obviously Jesus is of little concern to many people. Instead we live in a secularized society founded on the principle God doesn't matter.

This is the task ahead of us. As secularism is quickly on the rise, many people are not hearing about Jesus Christ. Southern Maryland is more like Acts chapter 17 than ever before. Many voices are competing to be heard and people are listening. They

continued pg. 2

Continued from pg. 1.....

are distracted by all sorts of religious ideas, theories, as well as sports, activities and philosophies of life. All of these voices are diverting people away from the truth of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul understood his own times and mission well. Paul knew why Jesus had sent him out as a preacher of the Good News of the Gospel in Acts 26:18, ***“to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”***

At one time churches put almost total emphasis on Christian formation in terms of worship, Sunday School, youth groups, and Bible studies. Little emphasis was put on evangelism and outreach. However as more people have questions and doubts about God, they are no longer flocking to a church to find their answers. Instead they turn to the Internet, books and movies.

Therefore, we need to be the ones who go to them. We need to see ourselves as missionaries to Southern Maryland. Every time you step out your door you are representing Jesus Christ and His Gospel. How you work and socialize and shop all reflect back on your public faith in Christ.

Jesus clarified the missional aspect of our Christian discipleship in John 20:21 – ***“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”***

In our day, spiritual formation and evangelism both need equal priority. It is our mission to go and share/live the Gospel so that people may repent, believe and be baptized. As the Letter to the Romans logically explains, how can people hear about Christ unless we go to them? We can no longer assume that people will come to us, we need to enthusiastically go to them.

Too many churches are shrinking and closing. One of the main reasons is that congregations are sitting inside their buildings waiting for the people to come inside. Jesus’ model is that we are to be empowered by Word and Sacrament and go outside to the people.

Larger numbers are deluded in the reasons for staying away from church. ***In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.*** (2 Corinthians 4:4-5 ESV)

If humanists and the new atheists are organizing themselves to promote their message, St. Paul’s ought to be even better organized around the Gospel. The Father has given us the Good News of the Son not to keep it to ourselves, but to announce it any way we can.

As this Easter season of 2014 rolls around, I want to encourage you to be thinking about how Jesus loves the people around you. I want you to remember how they are temporarily blinded to the love of Christ. I want you to remember the message of mercy and grace that saved you is on the lookout to save others around you as well.

God planted St. Paul’s in Mechanicsville/New Market over 100 years ago to be revitalized at this very moment. Why? To be a force in Southern Maryland in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are here to see this total region changed spiritually, culturally and socially. We are here not for our agendas but for the mission of Christ – to preach the Gospel and see the prisoners set free.

News from St. Paul's Sunday School

The Little Children and Jesus – Matthew 19:13-15

The little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Greetings from the Sunday school. We continue to come together each Sunday and learn more about the amazing love God has for us.

I know that many of us throughout the church are still recovering from the sudden loss of Nancy Drury last month. As a Sunday school, it has been a very sad loss for both our teachers and the children. I personally first worked with Nancy as her aide in the nursery class 20 years ago. She meant something very special to each of our current teachers and was the beginning Christian light for many of our congregation's children over the years. For the remainder of this year, her class will be taken over by yet another capable protégée, Melissa Werth, who has been Nancy's aide since August. We are very grateful for Melissa's enthusiasm to carry on the work of teaching our youngest children.

We are excited about the up coming Easter season. Again this year, we welcome all the Sunday school children for our Annual Easter Egg Hunt, which will be held Easter morning as a part of our special group Easter Sunday school class and activities. We hope all the students can attend to help us celebrate the most glorious event of the church calendar! Melissa Chew

What Family Do You Belong to?

We all have families that we love, like, and put up with. Our obvious families are our kids, mom, and dad. Sometimes you have extended families by your spouse, neighbors, church, and office work families. In my case, I also have the Robobees as part of my extended family. That can be a lot of families to love. Although, there is always that one family member that just drives you crazy. The best thing to do is that you just gotta love them.

In one of the few testaments about Jesus as a boy, he stayed behind in the temple as his parents and relatives began the journey home. When Mary asked him why, "And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49 ESV). Brothers and sisters, we are all baptized into the Body of Christ. Therefore we are all one family in Christ.

"Oh Lord, Heavenly God and Father, we rejoice that through the waters of Baptism You made us Your own children and by Your grace You have brought us to faith in Christ Jesus. Guide our St. Paul's family to serve Your will and the needs of others. In God's Holy name we pray. Amen."

Paul Mehrkam, Head Elder



Join the
Easter Choir

St. Paul's Choir News

The choir is busily preparing music for Holy Week. (And there is LOTS of music for Holy Week!) We would love to have you join us in preparations for this very special time.

The choir meets on Wednesdays at 6:00 PM prior to the Lenten services. We also practice at 9:45 on Sunday mornings, if you can't make the Wednesday practices.

*Dear Lord, Help me to see the beauty and hope of your resurrection. Remind me, O Lord, that You are there even when life is hard and that deep healing can come when I **sing and worship**. Lord, help me to **sing a new song** and to see that You are often doing Your most important work in my life.*

Gayle Gepert Choir Director



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**Behold, now is the favorable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation.**

2 Corinthians 6:2

Letters to St. Paul's Congregation

The Family of Ellsworth Pinkney Beverage

We would all like to thank the congregation of St. Paul's for their support, love and the use of the Church for our family Celebration of Dad. There is nothing like our Church family!

Love, Bobby, Lois and Family

To Our Friends At St. Paul's...

One year ago this week Tom and I began our journey as we waited for our new home to be built. We are finally and officially "Delawarians" settled in our new home and our new church. We will always feel blessed by the many friendships we made while at St. Paul's and will continue to keep St. Paul's in our prayers.

Tom and Cathee Smith