



PASTOR'S MESSAGE - DECEMBER 2020

Beloved,

I can't believe that this year has zipped by so quickly. We have experienced the hardest year that I can remember aside from the 9-11 fallout. We have been challenged as Christians at every turn. People have taken positions at opposing ends of so many things. To wear a mask or not wear a mask ... cheating in the presidential election or not ... Covid-19 isn't real to those who are so scared that they haven't left their homes since March. Our world is facing a time that I have never experienced in my lifetime. We all have been very divided on how to react and live amongst this virus. The one thing that we should all be able to agree on is the fact that anxiety and fear will not add a day to any of our lives. Our Christian Nation has let our fear overtake our faith. I want not to admonish you, but rather to encourage you.

I don't think there was any biblical figure that was more tested by trial than that of Job. Even though he experienced such devastation and trial in his life, he always spoke of hope. In fact, the word hope is mentioned 32 times in the book of Job. He goes from having no hope in his gloomy life to the hope that can only be found in our Lord. Even in his struggles, and they were many, he found solace in the Lord. Satan was allowed to strip everything of any worth from Job ... His wealth, his family, all of it gone. God knew that he was a great man of faith. After Satan took everything, Job had this to say to him ... ²⁰ "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." *Job 1:20-22* (ESV)

If Job could get through the trials that he faced, then we too shall be able to do the same. In facing the challenges that we currently are, we must be able to acknowledge that Our Savior *can* and *will* lead us through anything in this world that we may face. He is greater than any disease that we will encounter. He is greater than any trial that we may encounter. He is greater than anything ... so let us focus on that this Advent season. Let's focus on what we can control. Let's remember the spirit of Christmas. Let's remember the path that Mary and Joseph traveled. Let's look into that manger on Christmas and see the only thing that can save us from our sins and from ourselves ... Jesus Christ! Let's focus on that miracle and our faith and our God will get us through the rest. Amen?

Blessings,

Rev. Gary R. Pomrenke

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What can I say about 2020, except that I am glad it is coming to an end? However, on the other hand, I see all that we should be thankful for here at St. Paul's in spite of many troubling and tough times! Thankful that we have been able to once again open up our church for worship services and Sunday School classes; thankful that we have been able to keep our doors open and our bills paid with everyone's help financially; thankful that we can stream our church services out to all of our church families and into the community; and thankful for the many exciting renovations and projects that we have accomplished here at St. Paul's during the past year. If we keep our eyes on our Lord and not let ourselves get lost in the turmoil of the world around us there is no telling what God has in store for St. Paul's in 2021!

Right now, we have a new oil heating system that we have had to install to keep heat in our sanctuary. To help pay for this we are asking everyone who can to take an envelope from the bulletin board in the hallway and make a gift to the church to help cover the cost of this large expense. One thing I have always seen at St. Paul's over the years is that when things get tough we always come through with God's help! **I want to thank Kathy Lewis for her many years of service on the Church Council working with our church finances. She will be stepping down in January when we welcome Sandy Frerichs as the new church treasurer. I also want to say thank you to Joel Solberg for the wonderful job he did this past year keeping the grass cut and our church grounds so neat and clean. We are definitely blessed to have so many wonderful people who are always ready to do God's work.**

In His Service, John Bowling President

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Brad Clements

Over the past two months we have had three major heating and air-conditioning problems develop.

- The air-conditioning for the kitchen and restrooms stopped working and needs to be replaced.
- The heating and air-conditioning system in the office area needs repairs. The heat does not consistently work.
- There is water in the underground oil tank located near the cemetery. This means that we need to replace the oil tank with an above ground tank and remove the old underground tank.

At the voters meeting on December 15, 2020, the congregation voted to move forward on these projects. We will rely on funding from the 2020 and 2021 budgets and congregational donations.

- Heating and air-conditioning in the office area was repaired on November 17, 2020, with funds from the operating budget.
- We have received proposals to replace the air conditioning system for the kitchen and restroom areas. The lowest proposal that was received is in the amount of \$4,400.
- The new above ground oil tank was installed on November 19, 2020. The installer filled the new above ground oil tank with oil, serviced the boiler, and started the boilers for the winter season.
- Paperwork to remove the old underground oil tank was filed with the Maryland Department of Environment and December 10th, has been tentatively scheduled for the removal of the old oil tank.

Phase I, Installing the new oil tank and the associated work with pumping out the old tank cost is \$3100.

Phase II, Removal and disposal of the old oil tank and site restoration cost is \$3,950. The total cost for both phases is \$7,050.

If you can contribute to help cover the cost of the oil tank project, it would be greatly appreciated. Please mark your contribution as "Oil Tank project".

On a brighter note, I would like to thank Joel Solberg for cutting the grass full-time this past year. Brett Wiggin has offered to help maintain the church grounds this coming year by cutting the grass. Joel has offered to be the backup grass cutter.

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sunday School News by Brenda Bowling

Sunday School Newsletter Article for December

As November comes to a close, I want to first say thank you to all of our Sunday School children and their families for their wonderful response to our collection of items for the Trinity Care Pantry at our sister church Trinity Lutheran Church in Lexington Park. It was wonderful to see the happy faces of our Sunday School children bringing in their bags of donations each week during the month of November and then proudly helping me load up my car before going to classes on the Sunday morning before Thanksgiving so the food could be delivered to Trinity!

The Sunday School is now looking toward Bethlehem and the amazing events that took place there as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of God's son through the following activities this month:



- **Sunday School Christmas Tree** – Our kids decorated our Christmas tree this past Sunday with a tree full of great Christmas nativity ornaments. It is always a fun activity and this year it even felt a little more Christmassy as we decorated the tree in front of the open door to increase ventilation. It was definitely a bit chilly outside. Hand sanitizer, masks, open windows and social distancing are the name of the game this year. But if it keeps everyone safe and allows us to keep God's word being taught, then Amen!
- **Advent Wreath** - Our Sunday School classes will be taking turns lighting the Advent wreath prior to the beginning of our 10:30 AM worship service during the 4 weeks of Advent.
 - **Christmas Program** - We could not hold our regular Christmas program this year because of COVID restrictions on the number of people in church at one time and worries about the safety for our kids during practices. So this year the Sunday School will be creating a Christmas video illustrating the song "Oh, What a Glorious Night" that we will be sharing with the congregation during both services on December 20th. A nativity scene has been set up in a room in the Education Building for classes to visit to experience the first Christmas in Bethlehem. We will also visit this room to take pictures of 1 or 2 children at a time in costumes that we will use to create this special Christmas video that we are looking forward to sharing with everyone.

Please note that there will be no Sunday School classes on Sunday, December 27th and January 3rd. Classes will resume again on Sunday, January 10th.

We pray that you have a blessed holiday season where the miracle of the manger brings joy and peace to all of you!

Merry Christmas to all of you from the teachers and staff of St. Paul's Sunday School!

STEWARDSHIP

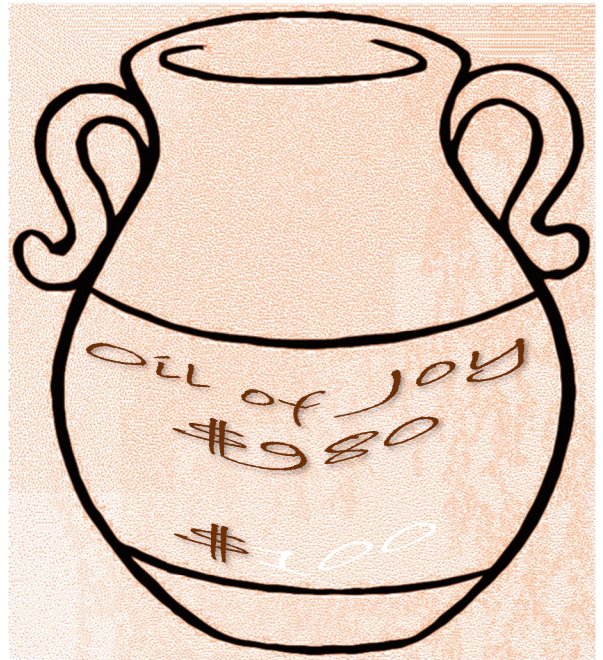
As most of you know, our church is in need of our help again. We have had to replace our oil tank and also have to pay to remove the old oil tank as well. The initial bill is around \$7,000.00. So it is time for us to go to God and ask him to help us to help our church. As I was thinking about how to inspire our congregation in this next fundraiser, I went to my bible. I looked up every verse that spoke about oil and immediately found God's inspiration in the Old Testament story of a widow that had her own debts that she was not sure how she was going to pay. She, too, went to God.

2 Kings 4:1-7 - The Widow's Oil

A widow cried out to Elisha as her late husband's debt collectors were coming to take her two sons as slaves to pay the debts. She explained that the only thing she had was "a little oil." Elisha instructed her to go to her neighbors and gather all the empty oil jars that she could. She was then told to go back to her house and take the little bit of oil she had and fill as many jars as possible. She filled every jar until her sons told her there were no more to fill. She went and told Elisha, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts."

In this story, God again directs one of his children to trust Him that the little they have will always be enough as long as we simply follow Him. Whenever God's people have needed Him, He is always there. I have no doubt that the little congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church will be no different. It is important for us to be there to take care of God's people and His house, the Church.

To do this, I am hoping that everyone will participate in this new bulletin board fundraiser. To get involved, everyone simply needs to take one of the little brown envelopes from the bulletin board in the main entry and use it to make a donation. Your donation should come from your heart and be as much as God moves you to donate to help cover the costs of the Church's bills to replace and remove our old oil tank (\$7,000.00). No amount is too small. Place the envelope in the collection plate or mail it to the church office. For money raised, an oil jar will be added to the board to represent the empty jars we bring to God to have him fill for us as we pay our debts for our new oil tank. The more money raised, the more Oil of Joy jars that will be added to the board.



And I am so proud and inspired that to date, two weeks into the fundraiser, **we have already raised \$980.00!** So keep your trust in God, that He will inspire and motivate us to do the most with what may seem like so little as we all come together, again, to take care of God's house. Thank you already for your support, and let's fill the board up with our own Oil of Joy jars!

You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the Oil of Joy. ~ Psalms 45:7

Stewardship Board Chairperson,

Melissa Chew

MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

What's Going On??

December 2020

As we prepare to receive the greatest gift of all, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ we are also looking to see what gifts might we share with our neighbors in our community.

The most important gift to share is God's Word, to be sure no one is hungry for the Gospel and the salvation it brings. We have also for many months been providing the gift of food to our neighbors so that their health and nourishment is maintained. The need as we know is great at this time and will be on going.

Another gift is that of joy! The joy of knowing God's mercy and grace and the joy we can bring to a child whose family is going through a challenging time. No matter how you may choose to share, if you are able, all of these gifts are appreciated. Bring to church whatever non-perishable food donations you can, and they will be taken on a weekly basis to area food banks.

If you can please look over the angel tree in the church hallway and take one to support for Christmas. Wrapped packages need to be returned to church by December 13th. If you are uncomfortable with shopping this holiday season financial donations are appreciated too. Please contact me if this is what you would like to do. If you are not coming to church in the next few days but would still like to contribute please contact me and we can send images of the angels available with the information.

Merry Christmas St Paul's and Thank You for Your Generous Hearts!



Mission and Ministry Chairperson
Lois Beverage

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1) Give God one very special gift just from you to him. Let this gift be something personal that no one else needs to know about, and let it be a sacrifice. David said in 2 Samuel 24 that he would not offer a sacrifice to God that cost him nothing. Maybe your gift to God will be to forgive someone you've needed to forgive for a long time. You may discover that you've given a gift back to yourself. Lewis B. Smedes wrote in his book, *Forgive and Forget*, "When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself." Perhaps your gift will be to commit to spending time with God daily. Or maybe there is something God has asked you to give up. Make this your most important gift of the season.

2) Set aside a special time to read the Christmas story in Luke 1:5-56 through 2:1-20.

3) Set up a Nativity scene in your home.

4) Plan a project of good will this Christmas. Adopt a single mom for Christmas. Do you have an elderly neighbor in need of home repairs or yard work? Find someone with a genuine need, involve your whole family, and see how happy you can make him or her this Christmas.

5) Give a surprise gift of service to each member of your family. Jesus taught us to serve by washing the disciples feet. He also taught us that it is "more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35 (NIV) Giving an unexpected gift of service to members of your family demonstrates Christ-like love and service. You might consider giving a back rub to your spouse, running an errand for your brother, or cleaning out a closet for your mother. Make it personal and meaningful and watch the blessings multiply.

6) Set aside a time of family devotions on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Before opening the gifts, take a few minutes to gather together as a family in prayer and devotions. Read a few Bible verses and discuss as a family the true meaning of Christmas.

7) Attend a Christmas church service together with your family. If you are alone this Christmas or don't have family living near you, invite a friend or a neighbor to join you.

8) Send Christmas cards that convey a spiritual message. This is an easy way to share your faith at Christmastime. If you've already bought the reindeer cards—no problem! Just write a Bible verse and include a personal message with each card.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAY'S

(Please send any additions, deletions or changes to info@stpaulssomd.com)



Bostwick, Elizabeth - 12/5

Otte, Dylan - 12/4

Gumtow, Jack - 12/6

Mehrkam, Paul - 12/9

Price, Lucy - 12/9

Wiggen, Karen - 12/9

Curtis, Christopher - 12/11

Maack, Sheryl - 12/15

Calloway, Rhett - 12/17


Short, John - 12/20

HAPPY New Year

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face
shine upon you, And be gracious to you...



DECEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		01	02	03	04	05
		Choir Recording 5:00 p.m.	Mid-week Advent Service 6:30 p.m.			
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
Services 8 & 10:30 a.m. (Live-Stream) Sunday School 9:15 in Edu. Bldg. H. S. in Nursery	Venturing Crew Outdoors (or CEB) 7 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Contact: mehrkam@ yahoo.com	Mid-week Advent Service 6:30 p.m.	Council Meeting 6:30 p.m. Church		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Services 8 & 10:30 a.m. (Live-Stream) Sunday School 9:15 in Edu. Bldg. H.S. in Nursery 2pm Venturing Crew Mtg Outside		Zoom Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Contact: mehrkam@ yahoo.com	Mid-week Advent Service 6:30 p.m.	Elder's Meeting 6:30 p.m. Online		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Services 8 & 10:30 a.m. (Live-Stream) Sunday School 9:15 in Edu. Bldg. High School in Nursery Children's Video both services.		Zoom Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Contact: mehrkam@ yahoo.com		Christmas Eve ServiceS 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.		
27	28	29	30	31		
Services 8 & 10:30 a.m. (Live-Stream)		Contact: mehrkam@ yahoo.com				

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
37707 New Market Turner Road
Mechanicsville, MD 20659-3075

Sunday School: 9:15 am

Adult Bible Study: 9:15 am

Teen Bible Study: 9:15 am

Office Hours Mon.-Fri. 10:00am to 2:00pm

Phone: 301.884.5184 Fax: 301-884-2063 Website: www.stpaulssomd.com

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