

CROSS CONNEC IONS

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

December 2024

Altar Flowers are Presented to the Glory of God

Altar Flowers are presented to the Glory of God on December 1st & 22nd. December 8th, 15th, & 29th will be dedicated in the Announcements for those weeks.

If you would like to make a recognition through the altar flowers, please stop by the credenza under the TV monitor in the atrium for a form in the lower box. Sign-up for the days(s) you would like and turn in your request form(s) which should indicate your announcement for the bulletin. Payment (\$40) at least one week in advance. If you have any questions, please speak to a staff person.

Pastor's Bible Study: 1-2 Thessalonians

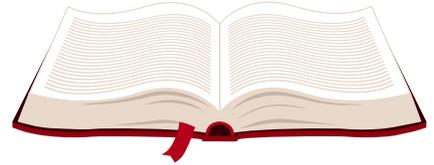
We are continuing in 1 Thessalonians. We meet Thursday mornings at 10:30 in the conference room and via Zoom. Notes and Zoom link are emailed early in the week. All are welcome to join!

Fall 2024 Adult Sunday School (Trinity Hall 9:45am-10:30am)

December 1st- Dwelling in the Word: Forgiveness with Vicar Ashley

December 8th- **2024 Annual Congregation Meeting**

December 15th- Dwelling in the Word: Mission with Vicar Ashley



Spring Adult Sunday School Leader Request:

I am starting to put together the spring semester adult Sunday school schedule and am in need of discussion leaders. We will be taking a look at the bible and our ELCA understanding within different aspects of social ministry. All sessions are from the ELCA so no preparation or creation will be needed, just a calling to lead the discussions. If you have a calling to lead a session or 2 please reach out directly to Megan Cunningham at mcunni16@gmail.com. The schedule is going to be released in the coming weeks so please be on the lookout.

Children's Sunday school is meeting each Sunday from 9:45 to 10:45 AM, downstairs in the Genesis room (near the downstairs kitchen). All children are welcome and encouraged to join us for a time of Bible stories, crafts, cooking, and fun! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Carole Ostrowski or Betty Hinshaw.

Young In Spirit: Begin your holiday joy with a play at Seymour Senior Center, 2521 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill. Mark your calendar for Friday, December 6 from 2:00-4:00pm.. Prime Time Players is presenting -"That 70's Christmas" with a recreation of the 1974 "Candy Williams Christmas Special. (The story of Candy Williams, a pop star in the '70s, now a retired Chapel Hill resident) There are no reserved seats and tickets are a freewill donation. You may want to arrive early. Dinner at Magone Italian Grill and Pizza following the play- 1129 Weaver Dairy Road, Suite F. If you are free on a Friday afternoon, come spend time with a great group of people. All are welcome!

St. Paul's 2024 Annual Congregation Meeting will be Sunday December 8th, 2024 During the Sunday School Hour: Attention ALL St. Paul's members will be having our annual congregation meeting on December 8th, 2024 during the Sunday school hour (9:45am - 10:30am). We will be voting on 3 very important items so we request that all members that are able to please come in person and vote. We will be voting on the 2025 budget approval, 3 new 2025 council members, and the recent constitution updates. Please note that at this time we will not be offering a zoom/online option so we ask that you please be in person. If you have any questions prior to this meeting you can reach out to the congregation president Joan Albright, congregation secretary Megan Cunningham, or Pastor Scott Anderson.

Join the Coffee Hour on Mondays on Zoom from 10-11.

Topic: Coffee Hour, Time: 10:00-11:00 am on Mondays

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91351103753?pwd=WVVCRlgrSUhhLzJWN3pPYnlyL25LZz09>

Meeting ID: 913 5110 3753 – Password: 292680

Growing Through Grief - Tuesdays 4PM - 6PM

December 3 “Keeping Your Loved Ones Close While Saying ‘Yes’ to Life,” with Donna Kaye

December 10 Cello Concert with Debbie Davis

December 17 “Final Thoughts,” with Bill Dahl

Advent Soup Suppers Sign-Up

We will again be having Wednesday Advent Soup Suppers before our church worship on December 4th and 11th. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy the meal. If you are interested in bringing a soup for one of these dates, please sign-up on the bulletin board. Five soups are needed for each supper and at least one of these should be vegetarian. Soup should be brought to church in a crockpot about 5:45 to 5:50 pm the night of the supper. If you have any questions please contact Martha Dahl, phone: 847-612-6687 or email: mjdahlhouse@gmail.com.

Christmas Dinner will be December 18, at 6:00pm

We hope to see everyone at our annual Christmas Dinner on Wednesday, December 18, at 6:00pm; Advent worship service to follow. Our main course choices this year will be salmon or ham. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board by Sunday, December 8. It is most appreciated if you will sign-up in advance to let us know your preference for the main course. This is needed to help with purchasing and preparing the meal. Please contact Martha Dahl if you are interested in bringing a dessert to the dinner, would like to offer help or have any questions. Martha Dahl phone: 847-612-6687 or email: mjdahlhouse@gmail.com.

UMD (Urban Ministries of Durham) Volunteer Update, Amanda Anderson

Moving forward, we're back to the original time frame, 11:30-1:30 pm. We'll help with meal prep before serving lunch just as we did previously, **only four volunteers are needed.** To accommodate our monthly Habitat for Humanity volunteer shift, the UMD shift will be the fourth Saturday of the month.

Volunteers MUST sign up online to participate. You can Sign up here:

https://bit.ly/UMD_Signup

As always, please reach out to me with questions about the logistics of volunteering, andersona1129@gmail.com.

Please consider contributing to our morning devotions.

Devotions: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044eabad28a3fd0-daily1>

Send devotions to assistant@stpaulsdurham.org

Sign-up Genius Links

Please consider volunteering to assist in worship. Click the link to sign-up.

Sunday Worship: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0944a4a72fa5f58-sunday1#/>

Available Opportunities: lector, worship assistant, altar guild, communion assistant, and usher.



Youth Group December Event - Friday December 13th, 6pm thru Saturday December 14th to about 2pm. The high school youth group will be enjoying a fun winter evening with dinner, fellowship around the firepit, a lock-in (with snacks and breakfast included), decorating Christmas cookies with the younger kids, and taking the decorated cookies to local fire stations. All middle school and high school age youth are encouraged to come for the fun. If you have any questions or would like more information please reach out to either Joan Albright or Megan Cunningham through the youth mailbox at youth@stpaulsdurham.org. And as a reminder if you would like to be in the loop and all youth group related communication please reach out again to youth@stpaulsdurham.org.

Cookies!



Working Adult Group, Youth Group, Children's ministry:

A Sweet Treat Day is Coming Soon So Mark Your Calendars - December 14th, 2024. Working Adults and Parents of preschool - high school age kids. On December 14th, 2024 from 10am to about 1pm in Trinity Hall the Working Adult Group will be having a holiday cookie baking day and during that time the high school youth group teenagers will be helping all preschool and elementary age kids with decorating Christmas cookies. Everyone will be going home with some sweet holiday treats and the decorated cookies will be taken by the high school youth group to some local fire stations.

Working Adult Group December Activity:

When: Saturday December 14th, 2024 starting around 9am until you want to stay

What: Cookie Baking Day

Where: Trinity Hall at church

Details: We will be having a day of baking different holiday cookies and treats. We encourage any children to come along as the youth group will be helping decorate cookies. Everyone will get to take home treats (including all kids), the staff will each be given a tray/tin of cookies and the youth group will be taking some out to local fire stations.

I will have typed up and printed out all recipes so if you have a recipe of a cookie that is not listed below, if you can provide that to me by Saturday November 16th so I can make sure it is typed up and all ingredients are purchased in advance. I will also be providing after the day a book of all the recipes and pictures so everyone can enjoy them again at home if they want.

(Cookie Treat lists: Sugar cookie w/ frosting, Pizzelles, Spritz, Snickerdoodles, Pixies/Crinkles, Mint Chocolate Pinwheels, Mexican Wedding Cakes, Peanut Butter Blossoms, Easy Fudge, Buckeyes, Chocolate No Bakes, Puppy Chow, Chex Mix)

I will have all ingredients purchased and in Trinity Hall by the end of the day on Friday December 13th, so if you would like to help with any purchases please let me know prior to that Friday. Or if you would like to put any money toward the purchase of ingredients can be done prior or after the day of baking.

I am starting to look into the 2025 schedule of activities, if there is something that you think would be great for the group please let me know and I can look into details and get it on the calendar.

And if you want to remind people or bring a friend, all are welcome. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns and have a great week.

St. Paul's Readers

During December, our church book club takes a holiday break. The next meeting is on Thursday, January 16, 2024, at 3 pm. Vicar Ashley Bowen will lead our discussion of *Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear* by Michael J. O'Loughlin, 2021.

Here is more information about this book. The 1980s and 1990s, the height of the AIDS crisis in the United States, was decades ago now, and many of the stories from this time remain hidden. This is one journalist's—gay and Catholic himself—compelling picture of those quiet heroes who responded to human suffering when so much of society—and so much of the church—told them to look away. These pure acts of compassion and mercy offer us hope and inspiration as we continue to confront existential questions about what it means to be Americans, Christians, and human beings responding to those most in need.

Other selections for the next few months are:

February 20: *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge, 2021

March 20: *Don't Let Go* by Harlan Coben, 2017

April 10: *Time Heals No Wounds: A Baltic Sea Crime Novel* by Hendrik Falkenberg 2013

May 15: *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, 2024

We invite all readers—men and women—to join us for a few or all our meetings. Please consider checking us out next year. Why not put one or more of our books on your Christmas list? Contact Katherine Trexler (katherine.m.trexler@gmail.com) with any questions. We hope to see you soon!



CREATION CARE

Are you looking for alternative, interesting gifts this season?

Visit a Fair Trade store in Durham: Bull City Fair Trade, 811 9th Street, for a variety of gifts.

You can find gifts that fight hunger and transform lives by shopping at ELCA Good Gifts. Purchases can be made for honeybees, pigs, cows, goats, fruit trees, drinking water and much more. You can request a catalog or shop on-line at goodgifts.elca.org.

Other Fair Trade gifts can be found at SERRV International. Request a catalog or shop at serrv.org.



Recycling information: Anything With a Plug Recycling truck will be at Haverty's parking lot, Renaissance Blvd, Durham on Saturday, December 21, 11-1. Drop off your electronics, plastics, metal objects and more. Check out anythingwithaplugrecycling.com for more information.

Learn about Bees and Beekeeping!

On Thursday nights from January 16 to March 20, St. Paul's will host "Bee School." This course is offered every year by the Durham County Beekeepers Association, and it's a great chance to learn more about honey bees. Some people take it as preparation to become beekeepers while others are just "bee curious." The course always fills up, so don't delay if you're interested. Details and registration can be found at durhambeekeepers.org. And talk to Tina Bessias, Theresa Oertel, or Bill Gresham anytime about the hives at St. Paul's!



The Giving Tree: There is a Christmas tree in the atrium which is decorated with envelopes. You may choose an envelope, then purchase the requested gift card and return it in the provided envelope. Food Lion gift cards (\$25, \$50) are requested for the Parktown Food Hub. Target or Walmart gift cards (\$25, \$50) will go to Burton Elementary School. All envelopes with gift cards inside may be returned to the offering plate or put in the Finance Office wall slot in the staff hallway. Deadline for giving is **Sunday, December 8th.**



Parktown Food Hub Holiday Events

Now that it's December we will once again be collecting cash and gift cards. This year the cards will be used for families in emergency situations and to make sure our shelves are stocked so everyone that we serve can receive a maximum amount of support. There are three ways to participate:

- Gift cards - we suggest amounts of \$25 or \$50, but smaller or larger amounts will be joyfully received
- One time cash donations - remember us in your end-of-year giving. You can donate online at <https://soduco.org/donate>
- Recurring donation - recurring donors play an especially important role in the work of organizations like the Parktown Food Hub. Whether it's \$5 per month, \$25 per month, \$250 per month, or even larger amounts, being able to plan around recurring donations is a great gift. You can set up a recurring donation at <https://soduco.org/donate>. All new recurring donors will receive a special gift - a handcrafted crocheted gift, made by me.

Thank you for your kindness, faithfulness, and friendship over the past year. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the year to come, Pastor Sharon Parktown Food Hub

PASTA for PARKTOWN!

Help Stock St. Paul's Shelf at Parktown Food Hub!

Donate boxes of dry pasta to the bin beneath the bulletin board in the Atrium. These boxes are given to hungry families at the Parktown area by the Food Hub. The Women's Connection Group is leading this initiative and it is accomplished through your generosity.

Parktown Food Hub is hiring!

The Parktown Food Hub's founder and director has decided it is time to say goodbye. The Board of Directors is looking to hire two passionate individuals, a Program Director and an Officer Manager, who want to continue the Hub's great work while bringing their own ideas, energy, knowledge, and skills. Both positions are part-time but salaried and do not include benefits. We hope to attract serious applicants who respect, value and understand the importance of this work. For more information, go to the following link:

<https://soduco.org/job-descriptions>

Join a musical ensemble at St. Paul's!

Interested participating in worship? Want to learn more about music? Or perhaps you simply want to keep up your musical knowledge and abilities. You should join a musical ensemble at St. Paul's! It's a great way to achieve all of these things, and be part of a community.

Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings, handbells from 6:30-7:15 and choir from 7:15-8:30. Ensembles normally perform at the 11:00 service but occasionally at the 8:30 service. Some ability to read sheet music is required for handbells. Ability to read music is also a plus for choir, but not required.

If interested, contact Ted Turner, director of music at music@stpaulsdurham.org

Dropped Stich: Meetings on the last Friday of each month at 1 pm in the church atrium where the sofas reside.

Jewelry Making

Joyce Veazey is offering an opportunity to learn jewelry making! Just bring yourself, If you are interested, contact Joyce to set up a time meet with her. Please refer to the church directory for contact info.

Offering Envelopes Starting in 2025

St. Paul's will no longer be mailing offering envelopes to your homes beginning in 2025.

If you would like envelopes, we have a quantity of boxes of envelopes that will be out on the round table in the atrium. They are labeled for each Sunday of a month not for a specific date. (1st Sunday in Jan, 2nd Sunday in Jan, etc)

We will continue to record you pledge without the necessity of a pledge number stamped envelope There will also be more envelopes in the pews each Sunday. If you cannot get to church to pick up a box of envelopes, we can mail a box to you upon request. Contact the church office to request a box of envelopes for next year. About 60% of our members give electronically and it is too costly to continue to mail envelopes to each of our members..

Our Afghan family support team is so grateful for your generosity in providing diapers for the past several months. We are once again requesting diapers in size 1, 3, 4, and 5 for one of the families. In addition, we are looking for a few more women drivers to help with getting families to their medical appointments. The families we support live just a few blocks from St. Paul's. If you are interested in helping, please contact Sally Hart, sallyshart1@gmail.com (or by phone, see church directory).

"Adopt a Duke Lutheran" Program

The Adopt a Duke Lutheran program fosters deeper connections between students and our partner churches by matching church families with students.

The "adopted" student may appreciate rides to the store or airport, help getting to know Durham a little bit better, take them to a worship service with you, go out for a meal or coffee, etc. You can decide how much time you'd like to spend together and how you might be helpful and supportive of your student.

If you are interested, please use the link below to fill out a quick form so that we can match you as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Ellen Lavery at laverye@hotmail.com.

Take the Adopt a Duke Lutheran Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVeZMiAt0AqyxLQN0cOn4DNQcu8mxvWtchraVrEp8rxblr5A/viewform?usp=sf_link

Support The Duke Lutherans Year End “Good Courage” Appeal

On Sunday nights before worship concludes the Duke Lutherans say a final prayer together, written by an English pastor and college chaplain, Eric Milner-White. The prayer ends with the words, “Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Week after week, the Duke Lutherans pray for faith and courage, trusting that even when the way forward is unclear, God’s guidance and unfailing love are sure.

These words are not only powerful for students, but they also serve as a guidepost for our campus ministry’s future plans. Led by Christ’s love, Duke Lutherans accompanies students in their faith journeys and roots them in their identities as beloved children of God. **Committing this work to the Lord, we developed a three-year strategic plan to ensure that Duke Lutherans Campus Ministry will continue building a community of God’s unconditional grace where all students are welcomed and cared for in spirit, mind, and body.** (Please visit www.dukelutherans.org to see the full Strategic Plan.)

The Duke Lutherans are sustained through your prayers, love, and giving. For the past three years (2021-2023) 77% of the ministry’s budget came from individual donations. Your gift enables us to focus on our Spirit-filled mission to be an inclusive campus ministry community of undergraduate and graduate students, called to share God’s gift of life together.

Please continue to join the Duke Lutherans in good courage, faith, and grace. We invite you to:

- + Consider the difference the Duke Lutherans have made in your life or others’ lives.
- + Consider the amount you could give. Are you able to increase the amount you gave last year or become a monthly sustaining donor?
- + Go online www.gifts.duke.edu to make a one-time gift or set up a recurring gift, or mail a check to Duke Lutherans: 1200 W. Cornwallis Rd, Durham, NC, 27705.
- + Consider making a legacy gift through your Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD), IRA, a life insurance policy, will, trust, or estate.

Your gift of any size will make a lasting impact on the lives of our students.

Please consider increasing your gift or becoming a monthly recurring donor before 2024 comes to a close.

On behalf of our current and future Duke Lutherans, thank you for sustaining this vital campus ministry!

In faith and good courage,
Pastor **Amanda Cindy**

Rev. **Amanda L. Highben**

Duke Lutherans Campus Minister

612.418.4192

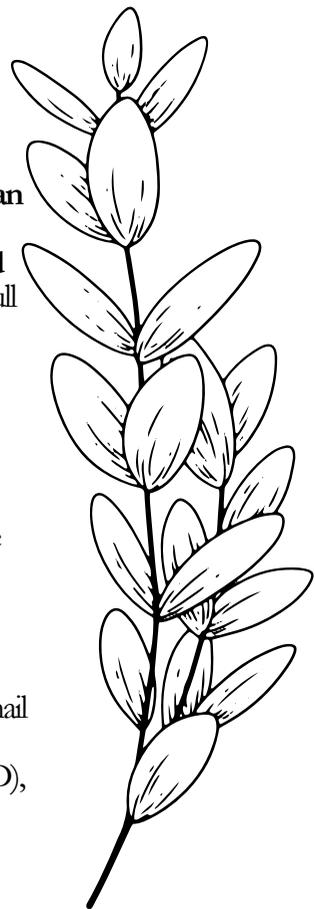
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Cindy Snyder

Duke Lutherans Committee Chair

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Duke Lutherans

2025-27 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

We are an inclusive campus ministry of undergraduate and graduate students, called to share God's gift of life together on campus, with our local congregations, and throughout Durham.

Vision Statement

A campus ministry community filled with God's grace and joy, where all are welcomed and loved.

Three Strategic Directions

I. Build a community rooted in God's unconditional grace, with an intentional focus on students' spiritual and mental wellbeing. The building blocks of this community will consist of students' relationships with three different groups:

a: Relationships with each other - We will nurture students' relationships with their fellow siblings in Christ, so that they might find sanctuary from the pressures of academic life and be rooted in their identities as beloved children of God.

b: Relationships with our partner churches (St. Paul's and Grace) and our Durham neighbors - Because we believe we are called to share God's gift of life together, we will help students to love and serve their Durham neighbors. We will also continue to foster meaningful connections between students and members of St. Paul's and Grace.

c: Relationships with Duke Lutherans alumni - We will cultivate caring relationships with alumni who will support the students' spiritual and vocational formation after graduation.

II. Increase undergraduate engagement and participation so that, together with our graduate students, more students develop stronger connections in our faith community that will grow throughout their time on campus and empower them to live out their faith on campus and beyond.

III. Work toward financial stability and sustainability to more fully support our mission and vision and fulfill the first two strategic plan priorities.

Financial Overview

Duke Lutherans Campus Ministry is primarily funded through individual donations. For the past three years (2021-23), 77% of the ministry's budget came from individual donations. Additional funding is received from our two partner churches, the North Carolina Synod (ELCA), and the ELCA. Additionally, grants from institutional organizations generally support programming, but do not cover operational costs, like salaries.

Ways to Donate

Visit <https://www.gifts.duke.edu/> and type "Duke Lutherans" in the search box to make a secure online donation.

Or make your check payable to Duke Lutherans and mail it to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1200 W. Cornwallis Rd, Durham, NC, 27705.



2024-2025 Student Leadership Team



Assembling flood buckets and hygiene kits with St. Paul's and Grace members



Duke Lutherans
Called to life together

PRAYER REQUEST EDITS

To streamline the process and help reduce errors, please visit the following link to add/remove people on the prayer list. <https://forms.gle/28wAjDpzQhEufuXu8>

PRAYER LIST

Prayers of the Church (Members)

Bee Ellertson, Jan Franzen, Janet Ravert, Joyce Veazy, Phyllis and Larry Jenkins, Bob and Ellie DeVries, Mary Bader, John Friedrich, Pat Casper, Anna Snyder, Pat Cashwell, Susan Esposito, Charlie Bock, and Rev. Wendy Waugh.

Prayers of the Church (Friends)

Kay Matthews and Robert Meissner (Tony Perotte's Mother and Uncle), Diane Johnson (Penni Perotte's friend), Tim and Sue Williams (Friends of the Foremans), Sara Russell (Sister of Anna Snyder), Sayge Lindsay (Grandson of Alta Lindsay), MJ Chevalier (Sister of Marcy Brown), Roketta Hudgins (Mother of Greg Hudgins), Gay Reed (Friend of Robin Winfree), Jacki, Stevens, and daughter (Friends of Joan Pepper), Armenia and Artsakh (Friends of Judy Schlegel), William and Barbara Wilson (Parents of Bill Wilson), Linda Leslie (Mother of Sean Slane), Paul DeVries (Brother of Bob DeVries), Gini Rinkus (Friend of the Dominicks), Elaine Williamson (Sister-in-Law of Hudgins), Paul (Son-in-Law of Jan Hunley, Richard Dominick (Brother of Ted Dominick), Burr Hasselbeck and Ruth Parker (Aunt of Pat Casper), Holly Cashwell (Pat Cashwell), Patrick Howell (Friend of Waughs), George and Pat Rose (Friends of Debbie Fulbright), John and Connie Heinz, Gregory and Colleen Davidson, Jack Taylor (Cousin of Dean and Marcia Redman), Debra Jetton (Sister of Bill Wilson), Penny Wagner (Niece of Marcia Wilson), Cole Cashwell (Grandson of Pat Cashwell), Dirk Davis (By Debbie Fulbright), Scott Duncan (Stepfather of Bill Elkin), Dave and Missy Pepper (Brother and Family of Joan Pepper), Chuck Johnson and Family (Husband and Family of Leslie Johnson), Vernice Knudsen (Mother of Ken Knudsen), Olga Niktin (By Patrick Chappel), Joan Mayfield (Aunt of Pat Casper), Vera Wiggins and Tony Jeeter (By Amy Elkin), Wini Robison (Aunt of Megan Cunningham), Sarah Jolly (sister of Marlene Coulter), Jeff Redman (Son of Dean and Marcia Redman), Emily Baumann (niece of Dean and Marcia Redman), Rebecca Taylor and family (friends of Megan Cunningham) and Pastor Fred and Gail Eichner (friends of the Foremans).

Rev. Scott Anderson, Pastor

Rev. Amanda Highben, Associate Pastor, Duke Lutherans

Ashley Bowman, Vicar

Susan Esposito, Parish Administrator & Editor

Heather Cain, Office Assistant

Dr. Ted Turner, Minister of Music

Alan Rigsbee, Bookkeeper

Candace King, Preschool Director

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Fax: 919-490-1088

Website: www.stpaulsdurham.org

Facebook: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pastor's Corner

It is the time of year that we get very busy around the church. The Giving Tree is up and ready to be given away to brighten the holidays for Parktown Food Hub and Burton Elementary School.

Midweek Advent worship begins December 4 at 7 pm. Our theme is Wait, Watch and Wonder. We will have soup suppers at 6pm with worship and Communion to follow.

Vicar Ashley, Pastor Amanda and Pastor Scott will be the mid-week preachers.

Christmas Eve Services, December 24 will be 4pm (geared to children and young families), 7pm and 10pm. 7pm and 10pm will be traditional Holy Communion Candlelight Services.

We will have a Lessons and Carols service with Holy Communion on December 29. Pastor Lorrell Strom-Jensen will preside. Services that day will be our usual 8:30 and 11am.

Action from the Congregation Council that you should be aware of:

-We are working to find someone to haul away the mobile classroom. It is no longer of use and we have to maintain heating and cooling to keep it from deteriorating. We have a possibility to remove it, so be aware if you see it missing that this is intentional.

-We are looking to sell the church bus. The cost to maintain it is more expensive than the benefit we currently receive from the bus.

-Annual meeting to vote on the budget, elect congregation council members and approve constitutional changes will be Dec. 8 during the Sunday School hour.

-Our council nominees are Bill Gresham, Jonathan Hodges and Nicolina Strom-Jensen.

I would like to welcome new members on December 15. If you would like to join our fellowship please talk to me (pastor@stpaulsdurham.org) prior to that Sunday. Currently Avery Johnson and Janel Brayboy will be welcomed into membership that Sunday.

I pray we all have a blessed Christmas.

Stephen Ministry and Sharing the Burden:

a submission by John Foreman

In the fourth chapter of John, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and asks her for a drink. This is surprising on several levels. First, Jews normally wouldn't have had any contact with a Samaritan, and especially not women alone. He tells her that while she can give him water to quench his thirst, He can give her living water so that she will never be thirsty. He then tells her to call her husband, and she responds that she doesn't have a husband. He responds that she is right in saying, "I have no husband", but that she has had five husbands and the one she has now is not her own. She then calls him a prophet and states that she is waiting for the Messiah. He tells her that the Messiah is He.

In this brief interaction, He never condemns or admonishes her for her past acts, He just listens and speaks truth to her. This is the role of the Stephen Minister. To listen to others without judgement or condemnation. The care receiver is free to say what is on his mind no matter how it might be perceived by others. The care receiver can unburden himself and release the cares he has bottled up.

Jesus also doesn't tell his disciples what she said, or worse her fellow villages - just as Stephen Ministers keep what they hear from their care receivers confidential. Because of this confidentiality, a Stephen's care receiver is again free to express her inner most fears and concerns. Just as non-judgmental listening is important for the care receiver to unburden her concerns and worries, confidentiality is essential for this as well. These are two attributes of a good friend.

(Cont.) Why do Stephen Ministers do this? In Galatians 6:2, Paul writes, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” It is because of this calling that Stephen Ministers at St. Paul’s willingly meet with their care receivers to walk with them and help them bear the burdens that they are experiencing. Stephen Ministers cannot remove or fix the burden, but they can help lessen it by listening to the care receiver, validating the care receiver’s feelings, and affirming the care receiver.

It is in this “ministry of presence” that amazing care occurs through the Stephen’s Ministers at St. Paul’s. By simply being there, listening attentively, validating the concerns, and affirming the care receiver’s feelings, Stephen Ministers share their care receiver’s burdens.

With this in mind, if you are or know someone who is going through one of life’s difficulties, such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, divorce, problems associated with aging, or loss of a job, contact Pastor Scott, John Foreman, Nan Treul, or Kim Hoke about getting a Stephen Minister. If you would like to become a Stephen Minister, contact one of the same people.

Vicar’s Ticker

With Pastor Scott’s return, and with the hiring of Heather, our new assistant, November has been a month where I have felt a lot of relief and gratitude. During Pastor Scott’s sabbatical I learned an important truth about ministry: you don’t always have time to get to all the things you want to get to. Now that we have a couple more people to divide the tasks, I’m grateful to have a little more time to get to more of the things that had fallen away the last few months.

One of those things has been visits. I’ve been enjoying spending more time visiting people and sharing home communion, and I’m hopeful that in the months ahead I’ll continue to be able to spend time with people outside the walls of the church. I’m grateful to be able to connect with people in meaningful ways and share the love of Jesus with them in fellowship.

A few weeks ago, I took a grant writing class through Duke. This was really useful because prior to the class I knew absolutely nothing about grants. I feel that it’s likely at some point I’ll be called to some kind of alternative ministry, so learning the basics on grants will be really valuable. I’m grateful to be able to be a lifelong learner and build the skills that I’ll need to be successful. At the end of October, Clark and I took a vacation to New River Gorge, West Virginia. We had originally planned to go to Asheville for a week. . . but those plans obviously changed. So we found ourselves with a backup plan, still wanting to go to the mountains. We spent a lot of time outdoors in and around America’s newest National Park.

Vicar's Ticker (Cont.)

One of the highlights of the trip was the bridge walk. New River Gorge Bridge is the longest single-span arch bridge in the world at about 3,000 feet (just over half mile) long. It also happens to be 876 feet above the ground in the middle. You can take a tour where you go on a walk from one end to the other via a 2-foot wide catwalk underneath the roadway that's used for bridge inspectors. I am not afraid of heights (or at least, didn't think I was) so this seemed like a great idea!

What I wasn't prepared for was how shaky the metal bridge is when you're walking underneath it and there're cars going by above you. Also, the tour guide explained to us all the details about the bridge construction... including that the heavy beams surrounding us and holding us up, were hollow. Suddenly I found that, at least for an hour or so, I was actually afraid of heights. It was disconcerting walking on a surface so high above the ground (even hooked in with a safety harness)... as the surface was shaking, and the support was hollow. But, obviously, we lived to tell the tale. And our guide told us that ours was his 225th tour, so many more people have survived the same thing. When you're in the middle of it the bridge feels shaky and scary, but there's a trust in the engineers who created it (even if I can't understand it) – and in the knowledge that many people have gone before and have made it.

And that's just how our faith is sometimes. When you're in the middle of it – especially in a time of crisis or suffering – it can really feel quite shaky. It can feel like the hollow beams holding up our faith are too flimsy to support the weight of our experience as we try to navigate walking from one side to the other. But we have a divine engineer who knows how to put a bridge together – and countless others have walked that same bridge before we did.

Whichever of life's bridges we're each currently walking, whether it feels shaky or sturdy, whether we know anyone else who has walked across that bridge before us, let us take comfort in knowing that we will make it to the other side – “For God will command the angels concerning you, to guard you in all of your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” (Psalm 91:11-12)



New River Gorge Bridge



Walking to the bridge to get to the catwalk underneath

Preschool News:

Merry Christmas Members and Friends of St. Paul's!

What a wonderful first 6 months it has been being your director of preschool! Sitting down to write this article has given me an opportunity to reflect on my journey so far and I wanted to tell you all how appreciative I am of you. Thank you for welcoming me with open arms! Thank you for your donations of supplies and books and toys! Thank you for your notes of welcome and encouragement, and most importantly, thank you for your time.

When I think about my most valuable resources, one stands out above the rest: time. It is a resource we cling to when seeking security. In a day at preschool, you'll often hear about how much time is left until the next friend can take a turn on the swing, or how much longer until snack time, and how much time is left until grownups return. However, I've noticed that once our questions are answered, or our turn comes, we are already eagerly looking toward what's next or mourn the time that was lost. Now that it's our turn to swing, we suddenly don't want to swing anymore. Now that it's time to go home, we are begging to stay just a few more minutes.

We are already painfully aware that life is short and this is the season where we seem to race against the clock the most. With so many loved ones to see and friends to catch up with, slowing down seems to be an unrealistic option. But is it? I wanted to know: what can we do to be more mindful in the moment?

In my research, I came across a Japanese koan (a Zen parable) that tells of a woman who is running from tigers. She comes to a cliffside and the only way down is by a vine. As she repels down the cliff, she notices there are also tigers at the bottom. Stuck on the side of the cliff with no safe way above or below, she takes a moment to look around her. She notices a small patch of strawberries growing around the weathered rocks. She looks back up, and then looks down again. Knowing that she will be facing tigers at either end, she grabs a strawberry, pops it in her mouth, and enjoys it thoroughly.

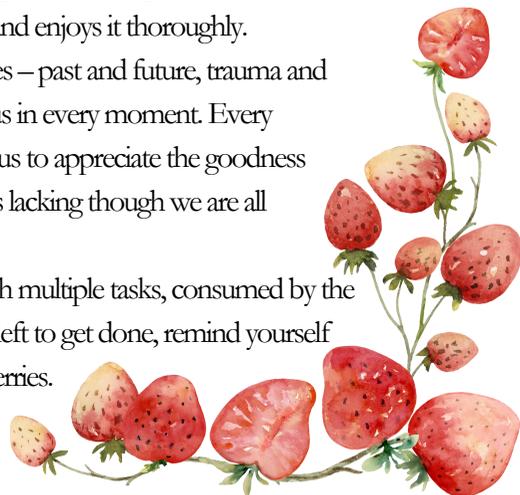
The parable highlights our tendencies to focus on the "tigers" in our lives – past and future, trauma and anxiety - while we disregard the "strawberries" – the small joys around us in every moment. Every moment we are in is precious but we have to choose to redirect our focus to appreciate the goodness that we are surrounded by. Otherwise, you too will feel like something is lacking though we are all swimming in abundance.

So when you find yourself like me - buzzing around trying to accomplish multiple tasks, consumed by the overwhelming thoughts of what I didn't get to do, and what I still have left to get done, remind yourself to stop. Take a moment. Take 3 deep breaths. And look for the strawberries.

I am wishing you all a wonderful Christmas holiday!

In Christ's Love,

Candace



2025 Congregational Counsel Nominees

Here is some information about next year's counsel nominees so that we can all get to know them better.

Jonathan Hodges (not pictured)

Jonathan was baptized a Baptist, attended an Episcopal school, and later confirmed a Lutheran after marrying his wife Sarah. No more denominational sampling is expected. Jonathan grew up in New Orleans and attended Trinity University and the University of Wisconsin. For the past 20 years, he has worked as a scientist in the medical device industry. Jonathan joined St. Paul's along with Sarah and their son Ben in 2023, and he is looking forward to contributing to a community that has welcomed him so warmly. The three of them live in Durham where Sarah is a physician and Ben is a junior at Riverside High School.

Nicoline Strom-Jensen

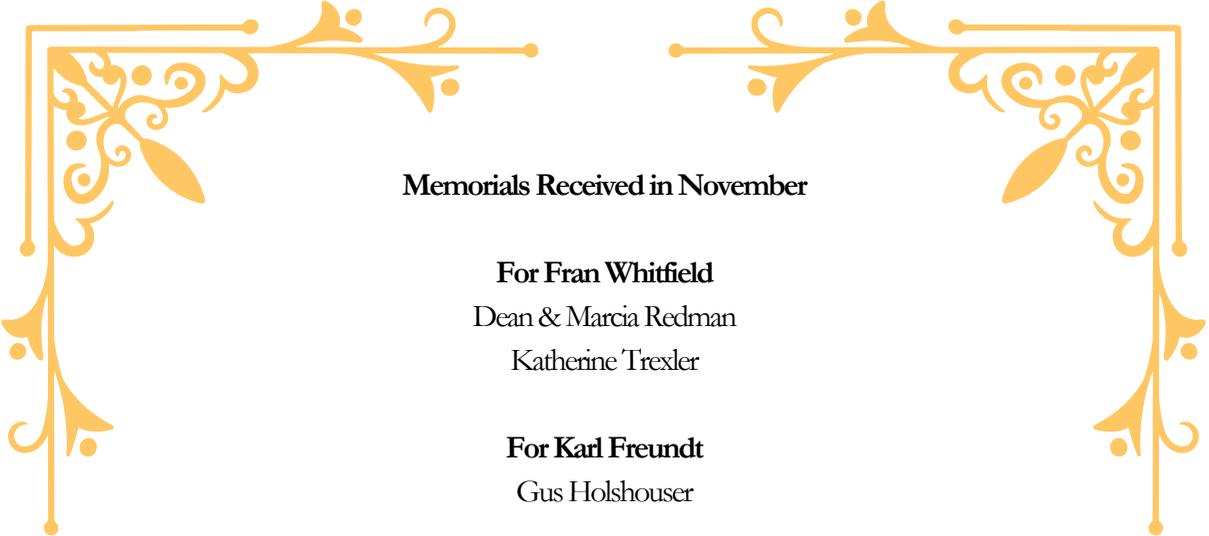


Nicoline, pronounced Nick-o-lena, joined St. Paul's a little over a year ago after moving to Durham leaving 13 years of living in New York City behind. A key reason for Durham was to be closer to her family. There is a good chance you have seen her family around: Pastor Lorrel, Phil and Søren. Nicoline grew up in the Lutheran Church and finds joy in being part of a faith community and having the opportunity to serve in that community. Her studies are what landed her in NYC to complete a Master's degree in Art History, but her career ended up in the tech industry and currently advertising technology. Outside of work she is an avid reader, enjoys sewing with her Mom, house projects with her Dad, eating Søren's cooking and caring for her 1 year old sibling cats, Artemis and Apollo.

Bill Grisham



I was born in Gainesville, FL, June 2, 1947. Raised in Tampa, FL. Graduated from Vanderbilt University in May, 1970, and was commissioned through the NROTC program as an Ensign in the US Navy upon graduation from Vanderbilt. I was trained as a Naval Flight Officer and served in the Navy until my discharge in April, 1975. I attended law school and graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia in December, 1977. I lived and practiced law in Missouri until May, 2020, when I moved to Durham to be closer to 2 of my 3 children. My daughter and son-in-law live in Chapel Hill and both teach at Duke. They have 2 of my 8 grandchildren, twins, Nicholas and Elissa. My son and daughter-in-law and their 3 children Liam, Findlay and Sebastian live in Durham. My third child, daughter Laura and her family, live in Miami, FL, and include 3 grandchildren, twins Ava and Owen and Cannon. I have been a member of St. Paul's congregation since mid- to late 2021. At St. Paul's, I am involved with the Tuesday Morning Mens' Group, the Afghan family care group, the Holy beekeepers and help with counting offerings on a regular basis. I am also a facilitator with Growing Through Grief. I am looking forward to being even more deeply involved with my church family as a member of the church council.



Memorials Received in November

For Fran Whitfield

Dean & Marcia Redman

Katherine Trexler

For Karl Freundt

Gus Holshouser

For Otti & Karl Freundt

Ron & Marcy Brown

Patsy Deweese

Lois Boynton

Nan Treul

Christmas Designations

We are offering two opportunities to make Christmas designations in honor or in memory of loved ones.

- * **Poinsettias** – they will grace the sanctuary with their beauty on December 24. They can be picked up by their owners following the last service on Christmas Eve.
- * **Lutheran World Relief** – Funds will be sent to Lutheran World Relief

DESIGNATIONS

_____ Poinsettias

_____ Designations to Lutheran World Relief

PLEASE use a separate form when listing designations (ex: one for Poinsettias, one for LWR)

EACH Designation is \$17.00.

Have the bulletin notation read: (Please print)

_____ To the Glory of God.

In honor of:

In memory of:

by: _____

Please enclose your payment with this form. All designations will be listed in the bulletins on December 24, 2024.

Have forms to the church by Tuesday, Dec 10, 2024