



Fall Edition, 2023

## St. Paul Lutheran Church

PO Box 200

277 W Pine Grove Rd

Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868

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# St. Paul Quarterly Letter

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## A Message from the Pastor

We are well into a season that has many names. Most often we call this season "Fall" or "Autumn." But it also has many more names. For the historical and etymological pedants, it is "Fall of the Leaves." For the agriculturally minded, "Harvest." For the sporty it is "Football season" and for the less than sporty and more musical "Marching band season." For Halloween aficionados, "Spooky season" or just "Halloween season." But for many languages outside of English, this season is simply known as something akin to "summer's end." And it truly does have a sense of ending to it.

There is a sense of finality to this season. We are quickly drawing this year to a close and there are many festivities that will demand our time so it will fly by so quickly we will wonder where the time went. The trees in the forests are changing their colors and dropping their leaves, signaling a time of dormancy. Our days are becoming shorter and shorter with darkness descending earlier and earlier. The summertime songs of the treefrogs, crickets, and grasshoppers are fading into memory.

The texts we use in worship and the observances we mark also draw our attention to the finality of all things. We pay attention to the *Final* Harvest and the Feast at the *End* of Time. At the end of this month on Reformation Sunday, we will be praying for that great day when the whole church will finally be made one. We will soon be recalling the saints who have died in the last year on All Saints Sunday. (Remember to tell me and/or Melissa of anyone you want to be remembered!) On Christ the King Sunday, we will hear Jesus tell us about the separating of the sheep and the goats at the end of time. Even entering the early part of Advent provides little relief with Jesus teaching us about when he will return.

Naturally, this time causes us to reflect on how we are spending our lives. To whom or what are we giving more attention? Will that attention really matter in the end? We are forced to reflect on the fact that part of the life God calls us to is one where we share joy with one another. Are we promoting or hampering that joy? Regarding our work (be that paid, volunteer, or spiritual), are we laboring so that we may help as many other people as we can or are we simply trying to enrich ourselves without the desire to help? My hunch is that we would agree that we could all be a bit better than we have been.

Christ our Lord died and rose from the grave for a multitude of reasons, but chief among them is the desire to help us, you and me, to be set free from the death, decay, and damnation that this world levies so that we may celebrate with him for all eternity. In other words: to party forever and ever. Our Lord's goal has been, and continues to be, both service and celebration.

As I say week in and week out, this is not something we have earned. Rather, when our heads were kept low and could not even look up, Christ burst into our prison to set us free. "But who are we? Who do we think we are to even be worthy of such consideration?" Well on our own, we *are* nothing. **But** because Jesus has looked on us, chosen us, and called us, he is carrying us into the eternal springtime where life will never again disappoint. This is the work of God's love that, for us mortals, is completely irrational, but it is the truth to which we can reliably cling. The time of The Harvest may be coming, but so is The Feast and The Eternal Springtime.

Pastor Paul Tomkiel

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## Council President's Report

Summer has flown by and the cooler fall air has arrived. School buses are running again, and football has returned! It is indeed a season of anticipation as many look forward to a good school year and successful fall sports seasons. I am looking forward to what the coming months will bring for St. Paul and want to let you know about some of the exciting things that are happening in our congregation.

Our August Ice Cream Social was a popular event with over 30 people attending! Many came early to experience the Pine Grove Mills Farmers Market and the entertainment provided that evening. Thank you to everybody that helped with the setup, cleanup, and donating toppings. A special thanks to Bill Stout for donating the delicious ice cream!

Our church family celebrated Tyler and Sydney Bennington rejoining as members in July and Keith and Joy Kling joining in September. Welcome back Tyler and Sydney, and welcome Keith and Joy! Also, Deb and Ron Strouse formally joined the church although they have already been major contributors to our church family for years.

Pastor Paul led a 4-week crash course on the 4 Gospel writers. We had 11 different people who attended at least one of the sessions! Sally Kolesar will be leading the next Bible Study (see details elsewhere in this newsletter) and we encourage everybody to try at least one offering this year!

Our congregation sent cards to Shirley Gilligan in honor of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday! (A recent picture of Shirley and her nieces is included in the newsletter.)

Our new printer/copier has arrived and is already paying dividends! The new machine is capable of printing, folding, and stapling the bulletin (including a color cover) with a single command. To print a few extra bulletins on Sunday morning previously took about 10 minutes for the machine to warm up, print the pages (assuming no paper jams!), and then manually assemble the pages in the correct order, fold, and staple. Recently we ran out of bulletins on Sunday morning, and Pastor Paul was able to walk to his

office during the worship service and print several bulletins in the time that it took to read the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson!

Our West Penn Power Sustainability Energy Fund (WPPSEF) grant agreement was received in mid-September. At the time of this writing we still have some details to work out, but we should be moving forward with an ASHRAE Level 1 energy audit later this fall. This will allow us to have an external auditor inspect our facility and identify energy efficiency improvements that should be made before converting to solar energy. The grant will provide \$9000 for us to fund this initiative and we will be eligible for discounts/rebates for implementing recommendations included in the audit!

The congregation provided supplies and assembled 12 school kits for Lutheran World Relief. Education is one of the strongest tools a community has for breaking the cycle of poverty, and these supplies will help children continue learning in the face of serious obstacles.

The Farmers Market has completed another year and continues to be a wonderful asset to our community! Thank you to everybody who volunteered to help at the market and to our congregation members who participate on the Farmer's Market board!

Last but not least, I'm happy to report that the St. Paul choir is active again! I look forward to hearing more anthems in the future! The choir is always looking for more members, so contact Michelle McMullen if you are interested in participating.

Unfortunately, not all of the news is good. We lost longtime member Helen Magnuson in August. Helen was a pillar of our congregation for many years. She was a dedicated member of the choir and served on numerous church councils, among many other contributions.

Enjoy the beautiful fall season!

Jeff Muthler

Council President

### **Bible Study: The Parables of Jesus**

**October 11, 18, 25**

**November 8, 15, 22**

Come to meet Jesus in the parables he told. Read and discuss parables from 3 Gospels -- why he told them, what they meant then, and what do they mean to us today.

### **Worship & Music Request**

There are sign up sheets on the table in the Narthex for weekly duties. The duties are usher, bell ringing/live stream start and stop, and acolyte. There is further description of each job on the sheets. If you have questions, please talk with Karen Magnuson or Michelle McMullen.

## Meet Our Church Secretary

Church secretary (administrative assistant) Melissa Danser has been on the job this Summer, and she now has regular office hours. She and her husband, Christopher have been married for ten years and live in Bellefonte with their two daughters, Elena, who is 8, and Emma, who is 5. They have one dog, Bensen and a rabbit, Bun Buns. Melissa is actively involved in Girl Scouts, serving as a leader for both of her daughters' troops, working in the Service Unit. She is also PTA volunteer and loves finding new ways to serve her community. She wants you to know that she has already enjoyed her time at St. Paul and is looking forward to meeting everyone!

Melissa's Office Hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### We continue to pray for:

#### HOMEBOUND

Liz Perez  
Diane Kemmerer  
Marilyn Niemann  
Lois Corl  
Paul Anderson  
Lois Folmar  
Shirley Gilligan  
Leroy Dreibelbis

#### FRIENDS/RELATIVES

Pastor Kelley  
Merle Eyer  
Ramona Book  
Marin Alexis Tomkiel  
Nathan Williams  
Fred Muthler  
Barry Anderson  
Cara & Holden  
Ruth Tier  
Sam Bernstine  
Marlene Chamberlin  
Sylvia Way  
Joan & Tim Grove  
Millie Harper  
Joshua Potter  
Jay Rudy  
Dave & Marlene Kling  
Brian Woodward

#### OTHER MEMBERS

Eileen Butchkoski  
Janice Olsen  
Rich Olsen  
Pastor Paul

### WELCA

**October 22 -- Gathering for lunch and fellowship after worship. Discussion: possible Christmas project.**

**December 10 -- Christmas Party! Bring a friend!**

**Bring something to share for lunch if you can.**

**Meetings are at Stonebridge Community Room Please RSVP to [kolesarsally@comcast.net](mailto:kolesarsally@comcast.net)**

## St. Paul Teams

One of the goals of this newsletter is to let our church family know about the committees/teams of the St. Paul — who they are, what their purpose is, what they do, and their current actions and activities. This month we will tell you about one longstanding group, the Worship Team, and a fairly new team called LEAD.

### Worship and Music

The Worship and Music Team members are Pastor Paul Tomkiel, Michelle McMullen, Jim Rearick, Morgen Hummel, and Karen Magnuson. We continue to meet on the second Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., via zoom.

The agenda for each meeting includes a review of services, events, and activities that took place in the previous month, planning for the same in the upcoming month, and discussion of topical items. For September, we are looking ahead at Harvest Home Sunday on September 24, and the annual Blessing of the Animals on October 1. The team also is looking at reviewing our wedding policy and the best way to organize volunteers to help with things that need to be done prior to the Sunday worship service, such as starting the streaming software, ringing the bell, and lighting the altar candles.

Karen Magnuson

### LEAD

LEAD (Leading Everyday As Disciples) is a program of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) which helps congregations discover their strengths and weaknesses and use the knowledge gained through that process to strengthen and grow.

The team includes Pastor Paul, Michelle McMullen (facilitator), Judy Wills, Linda Govere, Linda Muthler, and Karen Magnuson.

The team will be meeting Saturday, September 16, for the third of four workshops this year, led by LEAD director Jessica Noonan. These two-hour workshops include the LEAD teams from three other congregations who join us via zoom. The members of our LEAD team follow and agenda and assignments provided through the LEAD website. The fourth and final workshop for this first year of the program takes place in November 11. In between the workshops this year, the St. Paul LEAD team has had its own team meetings to review and discuss how the LEAD program can be used to develop strategies and applications for our congregation at St. Paul. An example of this was the congregational survey that was conducted in June and July. The two congregations who are participating with St. Paul in the LEAD journey include Christ Episcopal in Temple, Texas, and St. Philip the Evangelist Episcopal in Houston, Texas.

See page 4 for a report from Michelle McMullen on LEAD

## LEAD Journey

First and foremost, the team sincerely thanks everyone who took the time to respond to the assessment we shared back in August. The goal is to get 50% of your weekly attendance to participate, and we had 21 participants! The results of the assessment show that our congregation is "becoming" which means:

- We are seeking to identify where God is calling us in our own unique context. This is wonderful news and the team is very excited.
- We had our third facilitated workshop on Saturday, September 16 and are half way through our first year of the journey. We talked about the next steps which are additional listening within the congregation and moving out to listen to the community in the Spring. In the next few weeks, we will be putting out a 3-5 question survey to gather information on your vision for our congregation. The survey will be available on paper and online. Once we have the information from that, we will be hosting several focus groups to dive deeper into our hopes and dreams.

Please continue to pray for the team. We are grateful for your trust in us to lead this time of discernment for our church family. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the team, please reach out to any of the members - Linda Govere, Michelle McMullen, Karen Magnuson, Linda Muthler, and Pastor Paul.



100 year-old St. Paul member, Shirley Gilligan celebrating with her nieces, Chaye DeMark, Sandy McGeorge, and Nancy Moore.

## Dementia Resources at St. Paul

In recent years, several of our beloved congregational members have succumbed to diseases associated with dementia, most notably Alzheimer's. Often known as "the long goodbye," Alzheimer's gradually causes its victims to lose not only their memories but the ability to talk, walk, swallow, and other functions required to survive. It takes a terrible toll, not only on the victims, but on the families and all those who love and care for them.

Recently, St. Paul was gifted a number of wonderful books on the subject of Alzheimer's and those caring for loved ones suffering from the disease. The books were given by Pam Bauman in memory of her aunt and god mother Helen Magnuson. Pam's gift of books is particularly meaningful since her mother, Helen's sister Charlotte, also passed away from Alzheimers. It also is a tribute to Pam's career as a librarian and library administrator to pass along the gift of knowledge to those who need resources.

The congregation is now blessed to have the following books available in the St. Paul library:

*The Caregiver's Guide to Dementia—Practical Advice for Caring for Yourself and Your Loved One*

*Alzheimer's Early Stages*

*The 36 Hour Day*

*Chicken Soup for the Soul—Living with Alzheimer's & Other Dementias*

*The Dementia Caregiver's Survival Guide*

*Creating Moments of Joy Along the Alzheimer's Journey*

*Still My Grandma*

*Ice Cream with Grandpa—A Loving Story for Kids about Alzheimer's & Dementia*

**Third Sundays** are special at St. Paul, because that's when we get together for food and fellowship. It's also a time when we share announcements that we don't want to share on YouTube. We thank all of you who bring food to share, the women who have signed up to set up and clean up on those Sundays, and those of you who will pitch in and help even though you did not sign up. We invite you to join us, even if you can't bring anything. This is a great Sunday to bring in your Food Bank contributions!

**JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17.**