**Opportunities to Serve**

As Christians we are called into the Lord’s service. It is through our humble service to each other and our neighbors that the Lord works to bring the light of His Son into the dark. No one can work alone, we need each other. As we serve joy is increased in us and in those around us.

We all serve in the ways that God has given us, in love toward our neighbor, and there is no form of service that is better or more worthy than any other. Those who serve in visible ways and those who serve through a meal or prayer or a card or a visit are all loved in God’s heart.

At St. Paul’s we have many opportunities to serve each other. One of them is to serve on the Church Council and/or with one of our ministries. The Church Council and various committees are simply means to help us serve each other in good order for the building up of us all. Think of them like gathering around the family table to talk about our lives together. There is joy in seeing service, but there is also work to be done. As we are approaching the annual election of Church Council on the third Sunday in January, we have these opportunities to serve. Please give them your prayerful consideration. If you know of someone who would be well chosen to serve you are free to nominate them for a position.

To propel us forward we need some people to willingly volunteer to help with Evangelism and Stewardship. Now please do not be scared when I say those words. There is no greater joy on this earth than to see someone learn about what Jesus has done for them and receive forgiveness. That is all evangelism and stewardship are. They work together to help proclaim the Gospel to people. My promise to you is that I will work with you to make this work a joy and good for building up your faith.

Pastor Donald Johnson

*See the last page of the newsletter for a nomination form. Each position on the council and each ministry are described in our constitution if you’re looking for more information.*

**Down to Us**

 Shoes on. Coats on, because, hey, it’s winter. Everyone buckled in, including the toddler who likes to

plank when being forced into a car seat. Books for each kid to make for a smooth ride. Drive to the grocery store, park, unbuckle everyone, walk inside, buckle the littlest one into the cart, get the milk and bananas, check out, walk out to the car, put away the cart, buckle everyone into the car again, head home, unbuckle the crew, shoes off, coats hung up. Whew! That was a bit of effort just to run a five minute errand to the store!

 Getting around with children— of any age—can slow you down. Sometimes, it feels impossible. There’s a reason that Instacart exists.

 Thankfully, when it comes to faith, we have a God who comes to *us*. In Matthew 21, we hear, “Behold, your king is coming to you,” when Jesus rides into Jerusalem (v. 5). Of course, He isn’t only riding as king into Jerusalem but also into our very lives. How wonderful that He comes right to us and dwells among us! We don’t have to ascend to Him—He descended to us. It wouldn’t only be a lot of effort for us to go to Him—it would be downright impossible. And if we can’t even get ourselves to our Lord, we certainly can’t lug our children along with us either.

 Have you ever been paralyzed at the thought of doing something hard because it was just so much work? Our Lord knows us so well—knows how we shut down at the slightest hint of impossibility—that He would never require us to “make a decision” for Him or ask us to wait with bated breath until our children “accept Christ” as their Savior. No. He makes the decision for us; He accepts us. We only receive Him with thankfulness and praise.

 He doesn’t ride in to fix our every problem in this life or to ensure that our families are perfect. Rather, He makes the greatest effort the world has ever seen so that the root problem— sin and death—will be solved forever. He comes to us just so He

can make the impossible possible, to die and rise again, to forgive us and restore us.

 We also get to be vehicles for Christ when we share the Gospel with our children and grandchildren. He loves to work through means, and often we are just the right mode of transportation to share the Good News of Jesus with those under our care. We may feel like the donkey, carrying the heavy burden of bringing Christ to our families, but truly it is God Himself who carries the burden for us. He does the grunt work.

 With that in mind, we are freed of our burdens, free to move and live and breathe, knowing that everywhere we go, He will meet us. He continues to come to us, in Word and Sacrament, and there is nowhere that we can go that He will not also be. We take heart also because He comes to our little ones too. Even now, their King has come to them, and He will never leave them. It’s no five-minute errand. He’s here to stay.



### ‘Success is in the eye of the beholder’

By Heidi Goehmann

 Jesus thinks you’re beautiful, male or female, tall or short, skinny or round, young or old (Song of Songs 4:7). Do we believe the same thing about our ministries?

God puts us in our time and space to do His work. What He reveals to each of us as fruit at any given time may look different.

 One benefit of the Body of Christ is that all the members fit together to make a whole. The same is true with our perspectives. The Word tells us what good fruit looks like. Sometimes we can see it for ourselves, and sometimes we need another member of the Body to say, “Hey! I see your good fruit!” and pinpoint what that is for us.

 Try asking a local partner in ministry: Where can you see the fruit of our ministry? What am I contributing to the work of God’s kingdom, and what is someone else contributing to the work that is really different? How do these pieces fit together?

What parts of ministry may not look beautiful to us, but look beautiful to God?

Here are some examples of unconventional ministry “successes”:

* Being invited to spend time with someone who is hurting: The invitation into someone’s pain opens the door to share the Word, but also builds a relationship bridge that is a unique place for God to do His work of grace.
* Baptizing or catechizing anyone … ever — whether you have 50 catechism students go through your church in a year or one every three years. Wow! Isn’t it a cool thing that we get to teach the Word and share the Gifts of the Church?!
* Having someone you have baptized or catechized stop you anywhere outside of church to talk. Again, these are relational places people don’t always get to be invited into. It would be easy for someone to walk on in the grocery store and ignore you. These moments bring the Gospel into the world and into the daily conversations for people, rather than the Gospel remaining within the walls of the church for them.
* Kids or teens from church waving to you in the park, calling your name, or telling their parent who you are. Kids and to some degree teens are usually open books. If they recognize you, they will have either a joy response or a fear response. If they aren’t scared of you, that means the Gospel you bring to them is one of hope and joy, even when you share a hard truth.
* Someone asking you a question about a sermon or a lesson you taught, or they heard.
* Someone sharing with you, with a coworker, or with anyone else how God has worked in their sorrow, their joy or their daily life.
* A new family coming to visit your ministry, your church, your school, or any other space or place you have been a part of establishing or maintaining to share God’s Word and His mercy.

 I’m sure you can add many more examples to this list. While we don’t need encouragement or “success” to validate the work of God, God certainly does give us His encouragement and fruit of His good work time and time again, often through another person helping us see it.

 And remember this today:

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

 In Christ, not one thing you do, not one moment you spend, not one gesture to another person is ever, ever wasted.

**Sunday School Schedule**

Mark your calendars! Here are the important upcoming Sunday school dates for the rest of the year!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January 5th, 2020 | Classes Resume |
| April 12th, 2020 | Easter Sunday—Children Sing |

*Stay tuned for more dates as the spring progresses.*

**Lcms Stewardship article** January 2020

 Our God is a God who works through means. He can and has worked immediately without agency, as the Bible testifies, but primarily, on the whole and for the most part, our God works through means. He does this not only for all of our earthly needs but also for all of our spiritual needs. And He does this for our benefit.

 He provides for all our needs of this body and life through means. He gives us fathers and mothers to care for us when we are young. Through them, God provides house and home, food and clothing, education and training in the arts and work of this world.

 He gives us good government to protect us from harm and danger; He gives us faithful neighbors and good friends to help in times of need and lack. He gives us employers who trade our work for income so that we may acquire the needs of the body. He gives us brains and brawn so that we will have something to trade with those employers for that needed income. This work, which we are able to do only because of what God has provided to us, redounds to the benefit of others. And so, the cycle of God giving through means continues.

 He provides for all our needs of our souls. He sent His Son into the flesh to be our Savior. In that body, our Lord Jesus Christ lived the life that God demands of us all – a life we have failed to live because of our sins – and, in that body, He made payment for those sins on the cross, once and for all.

 God delivers this forgiveness through the means of His Word and Sacraments. He calls pastors to proclaim, in His stead and by His command, that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Through these same pastors, God Himself claims us as His own in Holy Baptism, placing His own name on us in water and Word, igniting faith by the gift of the Holy Spirit. And He gives us His life-giving body and blood to nourish us in this same faith until the end. Our God is a God who works through means.

 This is true also of stewardship. This is what St. Paul wrote in Philippians:

“I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:18–19).

 The gift St. Paul received from the Philippian church is a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. They gave to God. God provided for St. Paul through the Philippians. And the God who loves both Paul and the Philippians will supply their every need according to the riches in Christ Jesus. Our God is a God who works through means.

 “For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus Christ],” St. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 1:20. This is true also of you. Trust in the God who provides for all that we need in body and soul through means. And not only will you find His “yes” to you, but others will find it, too, through you. “But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you – see that you excel in this act of grace also” (2 Cor. 8:7).



**THANK YOU!**

 Thank you to everyone who worked so selflessly this Christmas season to help with the proclamation of God’s Word. I especially want to thank the trustees for working so hard to get the sanctuary beautified, I heard many wonderful comments. Also, all who volunteered to usher and spent time getting the services ready for our families and guests. Thank you to everyone who provided special music of singing and piano and organ, music fills the heart with joy! A very special thank you to Jenn for all of her work in preparing our worship bulletins and newsletters and presentations and for just helping keep me organized and on track.

 I also want to thank all of you who have sent cards and gifts to my family. We really appreciate knowing we are in your prayers and hearts.

 As I write this, I am overcome with how great a cloud of witnesses you all are and how your selflessness and calm service abundantly display the Peace of God given to us through the gift of His Son.

Pastor Johnson

**Every Kid to Camp!**

 Here at St. Paul we want to send a kid and a friend to camp for free!

 If your 3rd-8th grade child has never been to Camp Luther, then add their name and your contact information to the sign up in the entryway or email a name, grade for the 2019-2020 school year, and a phone number to stpaul@wi-net.com.

 One name will be chosen on January 26th and the winner will be allowed to bring a friend **for free!** If you have any questions, speak with Pastor Johnson or email him at donaldtjohnson@gmail.com

**Befriend Faithfulness**

Rev. Erik Rottmann, Trinity Lutheran, Cole Camp, MO

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. (Psalm 37:3)

 Not everything in God’s Bible can be translated from the original languages with exact precision. That can feel pretty disconcerting for Christians who desire to know

and understand the Scriptures. However, the difficulty of translation helps us all to remember that none of us shall master God’s living and limitless Word.

 The last phrase of the verse above illustrates the difficulty

of translation.

* In a moment of poetic beauty, the English Standard Version (ESV) has given us the wonderful translation “befriend faithfulness.”
* The New American Standard Bible (NASB) says “cultivate faithfulness” (NASB), and Luther’s translation says “make your living in faith.”
* The King James Version rendered the same phrase as “verily thou shalt be fed,” while the New International Version (NIV) went with “enjoy safe pasture.” (Similar possibilities also appear in the footnote to the ESV translation.)

 The point of the psalm is this: God’s Christians have nothing to fear. Because the death and resurrection of Jesus has so thoroughly forgiven our sins and so securely

rescued us from the hands of our enemies, we Christians can now live freely.

 “Trust in the Lord and do good!” When it comes to trusting God and loving our neighbor, we Christians have nothing to lose, because the resurrection of Jesus is money in the bank.

 “Dwell in the land!” The death and resurrection of Jesus has turned the land of Israel (promised to Abraham and ruled by David) into a figure of speech for us Christians. “The land” refers to the eternal life that is now ours in Christ and in which we shall live forever.

 “Befriend faithfulness!” or “cultivate faithfulness!” or even “enjoy security!” Here the Lord our God calls upon us to embrace and act upon the faith and security He has given to us in Christ. Luther’s translation is helpful in this regard: “Make your living in faith!” As Luther went on to explain, this phrase calls upon us quietly to toil through our daily lives, keeping faith in God and His mercy: “Keep your faith, and do not doubt. God will not forsake you. Just do your part, go on working and making a living, and let Him prevail” (AE 14:212).

 The phrase from the ESV, “befriend faithfulness,” is an especially beautiful nuance to the psalm. To be sure, the NASB did well with “cultivate faithfulness,” which depicts faithfulness to the Word and promises of God as a garden plot that needs our regular attention and long-term patience. But “befriend faithfulness” wonderfully shines. Here, faithfulness is depicted as an orphaned child or an abandoned martyr who could really use a friend. Will you be that friend?

 In this nasty, self-absorbed, victimized and victimizing world, there is probably no better image for faithfulness than an orphan or a martyr. Hardly anyone wishes to pay attention to faithfulness. Hardly anyone wants to devote their time and resources to “befriending” faithfulness. Yet this is precisely what the death and resurrection of Christ has made us powerful to do. He has set us free from want, worry, and care. He has set us free to be faithful, not because we must, but because we now feel drawn to faithfulness as a dear friend.



**Nomination Ballot for St. Paul’s Council**

Name: .

I nominate the following for Council consideration:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vice President (1 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
| **Elder (2 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
| **Trustee (1 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
| **Evangelism (2 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
| **Stewardship (2 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
| **Fellowship (3 needed):** |  |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |
|  *I have discussed with the nominee* |  *I have discussed with the nominee* |

* Election of Church Council will take place during the January Voter’s meeting on Sunday, January 19th. We will be further discussing nominations at the Council meeting on Wednesday, January 14th at 6:30pm.

**The Shepherd’s Voice**

**January 2020**

# St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Missouri Synod

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