

# The Foundation

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## The Newsletter of \*St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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\*We are in the Metropolitan New York Synod  
[www.mnys.org](http://www.mnys.org) of the Evangelical Lutheran  
Church America (ELCA) [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org).

## “Break Time”

It's break time. Working alone at your desk, or at the dining room table, you don't hear that phrase spoken out loud any more, only in your head. Sure you may stop for a piece of candy or a quick game but you can also fall into a project for hours on end, and then wonder later why you are so exhausted. With work spaces overlapping home, lines are blurred. While you might think work hours would suffer because of it, statistically the opposite is true.

Family life is suffering. Maybe it is because work has invaded the home or maybe it is because we are on top of each other and all stressed out. These are difficult times, indeed. Hang in there! Take a break. Do something, anything, different once in a while. It's easier said than done. Find the thing you love to do and do it but don't forget to love the ones your with, too. Give them some attention, they are struggling, too, or bored. If you're alone call someone!

*<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 (NRSV)*

This is sound advice from our church's namesake, Paul, but what does it mean to “pray without ceasing”? Can we not take a break? First off, focusing on the very things that weigh us down and laying them before God in prayer actually lightens the load. But prayer is not just what we ask of God, it is also our time for thanksgiving, our joys expressed, and, when we let it, the Holy Spirit will take us there, to seeing the blessings which abound around us.

Sometimes prayer IS the break we need the most. Have a happy, safe and healthy New Year!

**Rev. Paul Downing**

Pastor of St. Paul's E.L.C. P.J.S.

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## Gales' Thoughts

So, I was thinking.....about one of my favorite Psalms, 139, and how we cannot escape from God. Go ahead, read this Psalm before you read my column – go ahead. OK, good....now....when I read this Psalm, how I realize that God knows so much more about me than I know about myself. There are times when I don't know how to even describe my inner thoughts to God, but He knows what they are and even answers me when I haven't even said them aloud. "O Lord, you have searched me and known me, you know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely." (Verses 1-4) Guess what? We cannot even hide from God. This is intimate, this is complete. And He still loves us. (See verses 7-12). God formed us – he knit us together in the womb, carefully and tenderly. As verses 13-18 say, we were written in His book before time. How wonderful! And then verse 23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me the way everlasting." How personal this is.

How wonderful – he knows our every thought, every step, every plan every word even before they happen. I guess that's why sometimes I say something that I find amazing and really don't even know where it came from. Someone guided my thoughts. He knows our past and our future. He's there for us when we are down and happy for us in good times. He guides us and most times we don't even give it a thought.

Since this is a two-month *Foundation* I look back to New Year's when we all try to make New Year's resolutions which never last for more than a month probably. So, start the New Year thinking about how much God knows you and lives within you. Each day read from *Christ in our Home* and dwell on His word and how it pertains to your life and the lives of those around you. And, in February, we have the start of Lent. Again, some try to give up something, but does that last? I suggest giving up time and spend more time in the Word. The Psalms are wonderful. The Psalms express our emotions, our desires, and even our faith. They express our needs, our sorrows and our joys. There are 150 Psalms, and a little shy of 50 days from Ash Wednesday through Easter – why not try, as your Lenten expression, reading 3 Psalms a day. Put yourself into every Psalm. Luther found strength and inspiration in the Psalms; Jesus quoted the Psalms many times. May you be blessed by letting the Psalms speak to you.

Blessings,

**Deacon Gale**

(Retired Deacon of St. Paul's)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

## From the Treasurer's Desk

January, 2021

The year 2020 has proven to be a unique one at St. Paul's. The budget that we adopted in the beginning of the year seemed doable for our congregation. And then came covid-19. We ended the year with our income only reaching 89% of our budgeted amount. We had a shortfall in current giving, plate giving, and facility use fees. If we had not received an unplanned allocation from the paycheck protection program and a waiver of payment from Thrivent, we would have been in serious financial trouble. We also received a loan from the Small Business Administration to help with economic recovery.

Our budgeted expenses did not decrease much with the arrival of covid-19. Most of our regular expenses are related to payroll which we were able to keep current. We did pay off the Thrivent mortgage by using the funds from the SBA loan. The new loan was at a much lower interest rate. We actually ended the year with a small surplus taking into account our budgeted and non-budgeted expenses.

We did keep our commitment to our synod and paid our full mission support budgeted amount. The 2021 Budget Committee will be presenting a balanced budget to the council and congregation for approval. This budget shows us going in the wrong direction. We have not had an increase in commitments toward our annual giving plan. If St. Paul's is going to continue as is, we need everyone's support. I urge you to examine the annual report when you receive it. If you have questions, please ask them. This budget is for our whole congregation to approve. It is one of the few items that the congregation cannot delegate to another group. If we are going to rebound in 2021, everyone must be ready to support all of our efforts.

I especially want to thank John Sehlmeier, who since the covid-19 outbreak has been counting and depositing all of our offerings, Rich Greguski, who maintains all of our individual giving records, and our President Pat Force, who was a great sounding board and counsellor to me in helping make some very difficult decisions when covid-19 attacked.

Respectfully submitted,

**Deacon Stu Meade**

Congregation Treasurer

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
**Stewardship Column**

January, 2021 Foundation

We have all heard the expression, "Money talks." That's true. Money does talk. Maybe not in words or phrases that make up a language, but money talks. Because it is valuable to us, how we use it says much to those around us. People tend to spend their money on things that are important to them. With the exception of taxes, all of us speak with the contents of our wallets, purses, and checkbooks about what means the most to us.

In fact, we could go so far as to say that a person who does not spend money on something which is supposedly very important in his or her life really does not place much value on that item or activity. Suppose for a moment that you think "little league" baseball for kids is very important. You talk about it wherever you go. You attend the games. You enroll your children and grandchildren in the program. But, when someone calls and asks you to be a sponsor of a team, or when someone "passes the hat" at a game to help pay for equipment, you refuse to participate.

Wouldn't you agree that an impartial observer of such behavior would conclude correctly that little league baseball really doesn't mean much to you? Your lack of financial support would outweigh the other positive aspects of your attendance, enthusiasm, and participation.

The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. It is one thing to talk about Christianity. It is yet another to demonstrate our faith by how we use the money that God has entrusted to us. That is especially true in our support of the ministry of St. Paul's. As someone said recently in one church just before the offering was received, "Lord, in spite of all we say and do, this is what we think of you."

Jesus himself said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

We are starting a new year, with a new pared down budget based on your commitments. If we are to continue as a vibrant congregation, we need everyone to take on the challenge of supporting St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in 2021. Remember, God loves a cheerful giver.

**Deacon Stu Meade**

**Operation Christmas Child –  
Suffolk Area Team** (Submitted by  
**Carol Fazio** and edited by Pastor)

Happy New Year! I hope your holidays were blessed and that each of you are safe and well.

Packing and collecting shoebox gifts was certainly a challenge for us last year. A challenge that we met head-on and I am pleased to tell you, we succeeded. Suffolk County collected 17,919 shoebox gifts. OCC has just released the official numbers and here they are:

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Suffolk County –	17,919
US –	7,809,410
Worldwide –	9,113,853

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The in-person drop off was as contactless as possible for both you who were dropping off shoebox gifts and our volunteers. Let us praise God for keeping us safe and protected during this time. And praise God for the good weather. It did not rain during our collection hours for the entire National Collection Week.

Looking forward to 2021 we will be able to pack and collect shoebox gifts in a safe and efficient manner. We know the way to do this safely and we can continue to bless needy children around the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Just think 9,113,853 children will hear the Gospel because of what we have accomplished. It is so good to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Please remember to pray for these children that God will prepare their hearts to hear and receive the Gospel.

Thank you for packing shoebox gifts. If you had not packed these gifts the ministry of sharing the Gospel around the world would not happen. You are the first step, the foundation of this ministry. Without you there is no ministry. So please continue to pack shoebox gifts.

Serving Him,

Vic

Victor Rossomano  
Volunteer Area Coordinator  
Operation Christmas Child  
Suffolk Area Team

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## **SERMONS FOR JANUARY, 2021:**

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>** – The Who's classic rock opera "Tommy" had a song called "1921" which started off "I think '21 is going to be a good year..." I was surprised it wasn't being played leading in to this year but the fact remains, things are tough, and we have a long way to go. Pastor Downing has good news today, for **"THE BEGINNING"** of our salvation already was, from the beginning of time, according to the beginning of the Gospel of **John 1:1-18**.

**January 6<sup>th</sup>** – **"MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS"** is what Rev. Paul says for the day, and as the sermon message, during a special Wednesday midweek Facebook Live service. The Epiphany of Our Lord, this date, for many Christian communities, is the true time to exchange gifts as we recall, in **Matthew 2:1-12**, the magi or wise people, bringing gifts from afar to young Jesus in Bethlehem. This is the Savior of Nations!

**January 10<sup>th</sup>** – The First Sunday after Epiphany, or of the season of Epiphany, which means uncovering, truth being brought to light, is the Baptism of Our Lord. In Year B, now, of our three-year lectionary cycle, we follow Mark, predominantly, for our Gospel readings. This account begins with Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan. The Holy Spirit alights on him like a dove coming down, **Mark 1:4-11**. Pastor Paul's sermon is **"WHOSE SPIRIT IS THIS?"**

**January 17<sup>th</sup>** – Rev. Downing is excited to talk about **"WHAT YOU WILL SEE"** as we consider a young prophet, Samuel, and a guy under a fig tree. Sermon texts are **1 Samuel 3:1-20 & John 1:43-51**. Eli was old and losing his sight when his little prodigy heard the voice of God calling. "Here I am" the kid said to Eli but oh, no, this was the Lord calling. Go listen, child! Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus but Jesus knew him already. Despite qualms about a Messiah coming from Nazareth, Nat became a disciple.

**January 24<sup>th</sup>** – **"MINDS MADE UP"**, arguably that is the source of much of our woe today. The prophet Jonah was called to announce doom for a huge city called Nineveh, whose people happened to be enemies to Israel. Suspecting that God might change his mind he initially refused to go. Rev. Paul's sermon is based on **Jonah 3:1-5, 10 & Mark 1:14-20**. When Jesus said "Follow me and I will make you fish for people, four, now famous, fishermen had minds, or hearts, made up to immediately leave their nets.

**January 31<sup>st</sup>** – With **1 Corinthians 8:1-13 & Mark 1:21-28**, the excerpt from St. Paul's letter to Corinth contains an example of how **"WHAT YOU KNOW"** is important, but not as important as how you use that knowledge, while the Gospel has Jesus performing his first exorcism. Pastor Downing explores the dynamics surrounding two thousand year old events and situations which still have relevance in, and provide some bearing light for, our lives today.

## **SERMONS FOR FEBRUARY, 2021:**

**February 7<sup>th</sup>** – **"HE CURED MANY"**. Pastor Paul preaches about Jesus' healing and proclaiming described in **Mark 1:29-39**. At one point Simon and his companions go looking for Jesus, who had gotten up ahead of the sun to pray in a deserted place. Rather than just sit back and let the ones in need come to him, Jesus keeps moving, praying for guidance and searching out others who haven't heard the Good News, for many are still ill or dogged by demons.

**February 14<sup>th</sup>** – Rev. Paul will talk of **"WILL & WORD"** on Transfiguration Sunday. The scene is described in **Mark 9:2-9**, Jesus on the mountaintop with three of his closest friends, disciples Peter, James, and John. There appeared to them Elijah with Moses, the living prophet brought up to God from just outside the Promised Land with the prophet who brought down the law from God in the wilderness before they had even entered the Promised Land.

**February 17<sup>th</sup>** – This Ash Wednesday we will receive our ashes spread out throughout the day instead of all together at one service. This time around we will not only reflect on our mortality, perhaps doubly so, but we will also be reminded how alone we can be and feel. Pastor Downing's sermon for our Facebook Live 12 noon service, together apart, will be **"IN GOOD TIME"** based on the reading from **Isaiah 58:1-12**. What good is one day of humility?

**February 21<sup>st</sup>** – For the First Sunday in Lent we read **Mark 1:9-15**, the first two verses being the last two verses from the Gospel text on the First Sunday after Epiphany which was Baptism of Our Lord. Now we move from heavens torn apart and Spirit descending on Jesus to forty days of temptation in the wilderness. This account doesn't mention the three and out questions. Pastor Paul's message, **"YOUR BAPTISM"**, is not about a single moment of repentance but a life lived knowing whose you are.

**February 24<sup>th</sup>** – **A midweek series of Evening Prayer Services begins tonight for the Wednesdays of Lent.**

**February 28<sup>th</sup>** – When Jesus spoke openly about his impending rejection, murder, and rising again after three days the same dear Peter, who'd just called him the Messiah, balks at the prospect. **"BE NOT ASHAMED"** is Rev. Downing's homily today. Easier said than done, but of what are we likely to be ashamed? Jesus is not ashamed of you, else he would not give up his life for you. The text is **Mark 8:31-38**.

### **St. Paul's Regular Weekly Schedule:**

**\*Due to COVID-19 we will avoid in person gathering until further notice but church goes on! [www.StPaulsLCPJS.org](http://www.StPaulsLCPJS.org) has details and links.**

**\*\*Weekly Sunday church service is on Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. posted for any time thereafter. Go to [www.facebook.com/StPaulsELCA](http://www.facebook.com/StPaulsELCA)**

**\*\*\*Weekly Sunday Drive-in Parking Lot services 12:30 p.m. Remain in the car for 88.3 FM radio broadcast. Call after 10:45 a.m. for cancellation.**

**\*\*\*\*To attend Zoom events: click "Join a Meeting" enter Meeting ID listed in the Calendar below.**

**Go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) or call (646) 558-8656**

**\*\*\*\*\*Welcome Friends & area restaurants give out free to-go meals for the hungry, out of St. Paul's parking lot at 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday.**

### **January 2021 Checklist**

- Prayer Group via Zoom on break Fri. 1/1/2021.
- Second Sunday of Christmas service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 1/3/2021.
- PCM Board 8 a.m. Wednesday 1/6 via Zoom.
- Open Bible Study on Isaiah resumes at 10:30 a.m. Wednesdays via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 1/6, 13, 20 & 27 (weekly).
- Special Epiphany service on Facebook Live at 7:30 p.m. (& available after) Wednesday 1/6.
- Pinecrest Alumni 7:30 p.m. Wed. 1/6 via Zoom.
- Peconic Conference clergy monthly meeting 10 a.m. Thu. 1/7 via Zoom. Pericope may follow.
- "St. Mark's Bread" Food Pantry at Hope Selden 11 a.m. receiving then giving out food from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Thursdays 1/7, 14, 21 & 28.
- Prayer Group resumes at 10:30 a.m. Fridays via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) 1/8, 15, 22 & 29.
- Baptism of Our Lord First Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 1/10.
- Metro NY African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Be Bold" Annual Commemoration 4 p.m. Sunday 2/10.
- Mary Martha Bible Study on Ruth 10:30 a.m. Tue. 1/12 via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952).
- Worship & Music Committee 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 1/12 via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016).
- Peconic clergy Pericope Bible study 10 a.m. to 12 noon Thursdays 1/14, 21 & 28 via Zoom.
- Second Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 1/17.
- Church Council Meeting 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 1/19 via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826).
- Third Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 1/24.
- Mary Martha Bible Study 1 Samuel 10:30 a.m. Tue. 1/26 via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952).

- Fourth Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 1/31.

### **February 2021 Checklist**

- PCM Board 8 a.m. via Zoom Wednesday 2/3.
- Open Bible Study Isaiah via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 10:30 a.m. Wed. 2/3, 10, 17 & 24.
- Peconic Conference clergy monthly meeting via Zoom 10 a.m. Thu. 2/4. Pericope may follow.
- "St. Mark's Bread" Food Pantry at Hope Selden 11 a.m. receiving then giving out food from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Thursdays 2/4, 11, 18 & 25.
- Prayer Group via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) 10:30 a.m. Fridays 2/5, 12, 19 & 26. Contact Pastor Paul or Deacon Gale to add or remove names from the church's Prayer Lists.
- Fifth Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 2/7.
- Annual Meeting of the Congregation via Zoom (Meeting ID 971-0410-7513) at 3 p.m. Sunday 2/7.
- Metropolitan New York Synod Dean's Meeting via Zoom from 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Tuesday 2/9.
- Worship & Music Committee via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 2/9.
- Peconic clergy Pericope Bible study 10 a.m. to 12 noon Thursdays 2/11, 18 & 25 via Zoom.
- Transfiguration Last Sunday after Epiphany service Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 2/14.
- Congregation Council Meeting via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826) at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday 2/16.
- Ash Wednesday 2/17 Ashes are available all day in scheduled blocks of 15 minutes. Please contact Pastor Paul by e-mail to select your household's time. A service will be Facebook Live at 12 noon.
- First Sunday in Lent Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in Communion Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 2/21.
- Mary Martha Bible Study 1 Samuel via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952) 10:30 a.m. Tue. 2/23.
- Lent Midweek Evening Prayer service Facebook Live at 7:30 p.m. (& available after) Wed. 2/24.
- Second Sunday in Lent Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in Communion Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 2/28.



### **QR Code for giving to St. Paul's:**

*St. Paul's is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Metropolitan NY Synod. The ELCA Mission Statement: "Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world."* [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) & [www.mnys.org](http://www.mnys.org)

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