

The Foundation

Volume 55 Issue 2

March 2021

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

309 Patchogue Road, P.J.S. NY 11776

Office Phone: 631-473-2236

Cell Phone/Text: 347-423-3623

E-Mail: pastorpauldowning@yahoo.com

Deacons Stu Meade & Johnny Slade

Deacon Gale Capone (retired)

David Voss, Organist & Choir Director

Website: www.StPaulsLCPJS.org

<https://www.facebook.com/stpaulselca>

*We are in the Metropolitan New York Synod
www.mnys.org of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church America (ELCA) www.elca.org.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Lead Article from Pastor
- 2 "Gale's Thoughts" Article
- 2 From the Treasurer's Desk
- 3 Stewardship Column
- 4 Sermons for March & Holy Week
- 5 Electronic Giving
- 6 Weekly Schedule
- 6 March Events Checklist
- 6 April Events Checklist

"Senses Reeling, Senses Numb"

When the clairvoyant saw the future end to this pandemic coming we had one "happy medium". Other than that awful pun, the term 'happy medium' has not been a thing lately. It's been all or nothing: major stress or ultimate boredom; people calling for over-the-top compassion (if there is such a thing) or else selfishly disregarding the well-being of entire communities; cries for justice or the indefensible defense of out-and-out racism, oppression, and systematic inequity.

Neither does anyone want to meet in the middle any more, in good faith, resolving to come to a happy, or even an unhappy, medium. With such extremists wagging the dog of our society these days, championing blatant lies and sticking with them, we are constantly unsettled, as compromises between the rational and the irrational are, understandably, rare if not impossible.

Personally, I waffle between outrage and apathy, being very emotional and then being emotionally spent, caring too much (if there is such a thing) and then not wanting to care at all. Ironically, isolation is a way of showing that you do care in this current pandemic situation. Masks, distancing, refraining from gathering at church, travel, clubs, concerts, and events is the logical outpouring of support for the community. To quote hip-hop legends "Public Enemy", "Don't believe the hype." Hear these words from St. Paul instead.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

(Lead Article continues on page 3)

Gales' Thoughts

So, I was thinking.....about the advice I gave to myself as my Lenten discipline... reading and studying the Psalms, 3 a day. As of this writing, I am pretty much on track, just finished Psalm 53. Between my Bible (the Lutheran Study Bible), the notes on the side of each reading, and my wonderful book I bought when doing diakonia, "Psalms Now" by Leslie F. Brandt, I have really been able to delve into each Psalm. I have never been one to journal but I find after reading and absorbing each Psalm, I journal my thoughts and then, most times, write a prayer. I have always gone on the assumption that since God knows my thoughts anyway, why do I have to be so honest with him and admit my faults and failures.

Even though each Psalm has its own meaning, I have found that the one word that hits me each time is 'trust'. Even though there are only 11 Psalms that are attributed to trust, I found that word in some way in everyone I have read. So what are some reasons I have journaled where to trust God: Trust to make the right decisions; trust in God's protection; trust when people don't understand me; trust that nothing will separate me from His love; trust that I will walk in His path; trust that he will hear my cries, my fears, my doubts; trust that I am His child; trust He will never forsake me; trust He will be there when I stray; trust that 'no' could be the answer to a prayer; trust that whatever comes my way, I will have courage; trust that I won't be afraid when death is near; trust that God hears my prayers; and trust that my life is in His hands. And that's what I got out of the first 50 Psalms.

Psalm 51:6, "You desire truth in the inward being; therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart." Secret heart? What is that? I thought about it, as much as I don't verbally tell God everything, my secret heart is where I am honest; it's a place where God meets me alone. He knows what's in my secret heart and it waiting for me to 'come clean'. I have to learn to do that.

So, I ask you to 'come clean', reveal to Him what's in your secret heart. Trust that only God can cleanse us from those thoughts, those sins, the failures, that guilt that weighs so heavy on our hearts. My prayer for all of you is that your relationship with our God becomes more meaningful this Lenten season. I look forward to the day when we can all be in church, together, singing and praising His glorious name and thanking Him for getting us all through this terrible time as best as we could.

Blessings,

Deacon Gale
(Retired Deacon of St. Paul's)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

From the Treasurer's Desk

March, 2021

We have completed two months of our fiscal year and have 10 months to go. We should be nearing 17% of our annual income. We are only at 13%. So far, we have had no income in plate and only 2% in special contributions. Our current contributions are running at 12%. If we are going to come anywhere near our projection, we need to pick it up a bit. On a positive note, the special request toward the parsonage furnace is going well. We have received contributions of over \$4,000 toward the cost of \$7,400.

Our expenses are running ahead of our budgeted projections. Snow removal and heating costs are running ahead of projections. We have not paid anything toward our mission support (benevolence) allocation so far. We certainly anticipate returning to a more traditional worship experience in the near future as more people receive their vaccinations. Please remember to order your Easter flowers soon. Cost is \$8.00 per plant. Please give your order form to the ushers on Sunday or mail the order and payment to the church.

Instead of our coin folders that we have been using for some time, we sent every family a Lenten offering envelope. All money received from this program will be used as our contribution to the ELCA's 40 Days of Caring and Sharing. Won't you consider participating?

PROGRESS REPORT ON PARSONAGE FURNACE

As earlier reported, the parsonage furnace was replaced suddenly in early February when it stopped working. The cost of this project was \$7,350 in total. The oil company gave us a 6-month interest free loan while we worked on financing. To date, (March 1) we have received contributions of \$5,860. This leaves us a balance of \$1,490. If you have not contributed and would like to, please place your check payable to St. Paul's and place it in an envelope marked furnace replacement and either mail it or place in the offering plate on Sunday. You can also use the QR Code on the bulletin to take you directly to the contribution page on the website. There is also a category for furnace replacement there. Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far.

Respectfully submitted,

Deacon Stu Meade
Congregation Treasurer

Stewardship Column

March, 2021 Foundation

Life is full of choices. Regular gasoline or premium? Whole milk or 2%. Sweetened or unsweetened iced tea? Butter or margarine? Paper or plastic? Credit or debit?

The Christian life is also one that involves choices. Some of those choices may have been made for us by our parents when we were young. Some of those choices were reaffirmed as we grew up. The fact that we are a part of the ministry here at St. Paul's is the result of a choice.

Romans 6:13 describes one of the most important choices we will ever make in the Christian life. Writing to first century converts, the Apostle Paul instructed them, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness."

As God's children, we have a choice. One way or another, we are going to allow the control of our lives to be determined by a choice. Either we will choose to allow the enemy of our souls to be in control, or we will allow God to be in control. The interesting thing about this choice is that it is not a, once-in-a-lifetime decision. It's a decision that we make daily. Some days, we make it continuously throughout the day.

In spite of Flip Wilson's contention that "the devil made me do it." In reality, we determine whom we will serve. And unlike the decision regarding sweetened or unsweetened tea, this decision has eternal ramifications for St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Think about this question: If everyone who is on the rolls of our church were totally yielding to God every day, how would it impact the life and outreach of our congregation? If each of us totally yielded to the controlling power of Almighty God every moment of every day, the impact we could and would have for God's sake would be staggering.

Choices are inevitable. We cannot escape them. But one choice is of paramount importance, that of deciding who will be in charge of our lives. Do you know how Joshua responded when faced with that choice? Here's what he said, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Can and will you do the same?

Deacon Stu Meade

(Lead Article continued from page 1)

⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. – Romans 12:1-18 (NRSV)

The apostle Paul, sent to give good news, wrote this for the assembly in Rome whom he had yet to meet them. They were suffering tough times, the likes of which many of us now cannot even fathom. Senses were reeling, and senses grew numb, at the inhumanity being wrought upon human beings, one to another, just like we see today. As Church in the world, bound together by the Holy Spirit, let us use this time of introspection, repentance, and renewal to mediate peace, justice, and love for all people.

Blessings for Lent, Holy Week,

Rev. Paul Downing

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

SERMONS FOR MARCH & HOLY WEEK, 2021:

March 3rd – A midweek series of Evening Prayer using the Holden Prayer service, led by our organist David Voss, continues through the Wednesdays of Lent. Rev. Downing revisits the prior Sunday's Hebrew scripture readings and speaks of the Covenants there. This Second week of Lent it is the "**PROGENY COVENANT**" as aged Abraham and Sarah are wildly promised numerous offspring in **Genesis 17:1-7, 15-26**.

March 7th – "Zeal for your house will consume me." The disciples recall these words, written in Hebrew scripture, after they watch Jesus, whip in hand, clear the temple of money changers, sellers, and livestock in **John 2:13-22**. The First Commandment in **Exodus 20:2-6** is a reminder of just who "**YOUR GOD**" is. Pastor Paul will look at how little things have changed since Jesus cleansed the temple one day two thousand years ago.

March 10th – The third Covenant we look at in this year's Lenten walk is made with Israel as they are given the Ten Commandments in **Exodus 20:1-17**. Rev. Paul expands on the "**COMMANDMENT COVENANT**" and what it means to us today. Join us over Facebook Live, or watch it afterwards, for these solemn services of light in the darkness. David Voss' voice and accompaniment make for a beautiful Evening Prayer.

March 14th – A strange event for the people, Israel, in the wilderness, occurs in **Numbers 21:4-9**. It was not strange because they griped, we all do that. Neither was it strange that it angered God, for the greatest sin is a lack of faith. Nor was this odd because they were punished with poisonous asps, just look at what calamities ail us now. The strangeness is in the cure which God brings to all the people, then and now. "**YOUR BANNER WAVES**" is Pastor Paul's sermon, also based on **John 3:14-21**.

March 17th – Once again we gather for Holden Evening Prayer, sung by David Voss, this time pausing to reread **Numbers 21:4-9** and speak about what Rev. Downing is calling the "**SNAKEBITE COVENANT**". It also happens to be St. Patrick's Day. Included in the lore about Patrick is the driving out of all the snakes in Ireland, where he is patron saint. Something may have to be said about that.

March 21st – This Fifth Sunday in Lent, in the Gospel of **John 12:20-33**, Jesus talks about how, "**SEEDS MUST FALL**" so that new life might spring forth. Lent is about springtime, after all. Pastor Downing wrestles with Jesus' words, "Those who love their life will lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

March 24th – Finally, through the prophet, in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, God declares that a covenant between people and their Creator will be written on their very hearts. "**A HEARTY COVENANT**" is what Pastor Paul will explore as we come together, virtually, for Evening Prayer on this last Wednesday of Lent before Holy Week. We at St. Paul's truly appreciate our organist, David, as we once again experience the peaceful songs of prayer.

March 28th – Where last year we did not do the reading of the Passion from Matthew's Gospel, in the hopes that we would soon return to church and do so, this year, for the Sunday of the Passion and Palm Sunday, we will read **The Passion According to Mark 14:1—15:47**, even if it's over Zoom. At this writing we have not ascertained whether in church in person worship will be prudent. The last thing we want is to suffer a COVID outbreak when we are so close to having everyone vaccinated. We've waited this long.

March 29th – For the Monday of Holy Week Rev. Downing will lead us in a virtual walk around the sanctuary to visit the **14 Stations of the Cross**. Lord willing the upgraded WiFi will leave us with greater success than last year.

March 30th – On this Tuesday of Holy Week, in the usual evening time slot, Pastor Downing will offer up **Individual Absolution and Healing** in some way or another, stay tuned.

March 31st – The Wednesday of Holy Week is the last Wednesday of Lent. So, we will have one more Holden Evening Prayer service, this time marked with silence, spoken word, and an **Extended Prayer** time led by Pastor Paul.

April 1st – Maundy Thursday is the night in which Jesus instituted Holy Communion at the Lord's, Last, Supper, which would become the Church's Eucharist or Great Thanksgiving. Yet the appointed Gospel reading, **John 13:1-17, 31b-35**, only mentions Jesus washing his disciples' feet and the New Commandment, to "love one another as I have loved you". Pastor Paul's sermon is titled "**WINE & FEET**".

April 2nd – On Good Friday we read **John 18:1—19:42**. This is the Passion of Jesus Christ from the "one whom Jesus loved". The twisted path to the cross highlights the travesty (injustice) about to take place. Faith, as in life itself, discerns, within this whole big mess, God at work in human flesh, and making a way forward in hope. This is Christ Jesus "**SPEAKING, SPOKEN**", which will be Rev. Downing's sermon tonight.

April 3rd – Our **Peconic Conference** is working on another joint video service production, being put together by Rev. George Dietrich, and his team, at the Hampton's Lutheran Parish. **The Easter Vigil** is filled with dramatic readings and each contributing church will present one. Which one will St. Paul's be presenting? We'll see!

April 4th – The Resurrection of Our Lord is only spoken of, or inferred, in Mark's Gospel account, and "**NOT SEEN**". Perhaps Jesus' rising was even presumptive, given the early date some believe Mark was written. We have a reminder of the promise that the women, fearful and amazed at the empty tomb, received. Faith begs the question, what is it that you do see? Pastor Downing's Easter Sunday sermon is on **Mark 16:1-8**.

ELECTRONIC GIVING IS A GODSEND

With the corona virus still affecting St. Paul's for months, how will we survive and thrive in this environment. One useful tool for all of us to use is electronic giving.

What is Electronic Giving?

The term electronic giving encompasses a wide range of secure, automatic payment methods that can be used to make regular church offerings and other contributions without the need to write checks, carry cash, or prepare envelopes.

Electronic Giving works the same as the automatic payment methods used by most families to make mortgage or utility payments—and to receive payroll earnings or social security income. The easiest way to do this is to contact your bank and add St. Paul's Lutheran Church as a payee for your account. Indicate the amount and frequency of your payments and St. Paul's will receive your gift in the way you specify until you change it.

Another easy way to participate in Electronic Giving is to go to our website StPaulsLCPJS.org. Click on the giving tab at the top right and designate your gift amount and frequency. This can come directly from your checking account or from a credit card. If you use a credit card, you may be eligible for points or other incentives. Again, this giving continues as weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly until you change it.

Why Use Electronic Giving?

It is good for you. It saves you time on Sunday morning. You don't need to remember to bring your checkbook with you to church. You don't need to search for a pen to write your check. Banks still don't accept crayon written checks. You won't have to stop at the bank's ATM machine on the way to service. Your contributions are transmitted electronically and are directly deposited into the church's bank account.

This program helps to keep you on track with your stewardship commitment. Scheduled, automated offerings prevent you from falling behind on your financial estimate of giving.

This program guarantees your uninterrupted support. Even the most committed churchgoers will occasionally miss services—and regular offerings—due to illness, poor weather, vacations, or national emergencies like the corona virus.

For Additional Information

Talk to any of the people listed below who use electronic giving: Stu Meade, Jeanne Merone, Johnny and Amanda Slade, Ann Mitromaras, Sue Komperda, Marina Lynch, Ed Metcalf, Rich and Wendy Greguski, Maria Schaus, or Gale Capone.

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 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**

*****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 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.**

March 2021 Checklist

- Pastor Paul teaching Diakonia Visitation Course Class 1 of 5 over Zoom at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 3/2.
- Open Bible Study on Isaiah via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 10:30 a.m. Wed. 3/3, 10, 17 & 24.
- Lent Midweek Evening Prayer Facebook Live 7:30 p.m. (available after) Wed. 3/3, 10, 17 & 24.
- Peconic clergy Pericope Bible study via Zoom 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Thursdays 3/4, 11, 18 & 25.
- "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 3/4, 11, 18 & 25.
- Prayer Group via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) at 10:30 a.m. on Fridays 3/5, 12, 19 & 26.
- Third Sunday in Lent, Year B, services Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 3/7.
- Last day to order Easter Flowers is Sunday 3/7 (\$8 each Daffodils, Hyacinths, Tulips or Lilies).
- Mary Martha Bible Study 1 Samuel 8-? via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952) 10:30 a.m. Tue. 3/9.
- Worship & Music Committee via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 3/9.
- Daylight Savings Time – turn clocks ahead 1 hour Sat. 3/13 or you'll be late for church Sunday!
- Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year B, services Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 3/14.
- Annual Meeting of Peconic Conference via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) at 3 p.m. Sunday 3/14.
- Metropolitan New York Synod Dean's Meeting via Zoom from 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Tue. 3/16.
- Congregation Council Meeting via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826) 7:30 p.m. Tue. 3/16.
- Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year B, services Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 3/21.
- Mary Martha Bible Study on 1 Samuel via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952) 10:30 a.m. Tue. 3/23.
- Pastor Paul teaching Diakonia Visitation Course Class 2 of 5 over Zoom at 7 p.m. on Tue. 3/23.

- Sunday of the Passion & Palm Sunday services Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 2/28.
- Monday of Holy Week 14 Stations of the Cross Facebook Live at 7:30 p.m. 3/29.
- Tuesday of Holy Week Individual Absolution and Healing Facebook Live or Zoom 7:30 p.m. 3/30.
- Wednesday of Holy Week Lent Midweek Evening Prayer with Silence Facebook Live 7:30 p.m. 3/31.

April 2021 Checklist

- Maundy Thursday, Year B, services Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 5 p.m. & Facebook Live at 7:30 p.m. 4/1.
- Good Friday, Year B, services of Darkness & Veneration of the Cross in the Parking Lot at 5 p.m. & Facebook Live at 7:30 p.m. 4/2.
- Last Day of Lent & Holy Week online Easter Vigil service posted by our Peconic Conference 4/3.
- Resurrection of Our Lord Easter Day services Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot 12:30 p.m. 4/4.
- Pastor Paul teaching Diakonia Visitation Course Classes over Zoom at 7 p.m. Tue. 4/6, 13 & 27.
- Open Bible Study on Isaiah via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 10:30 a.m. Wed. 4/7, 14, 21 & 28.
- Peconic Conference clergy monthly meeting via Zoom 10 a.m. Thu. 4/8. Weekly Pericope follows.
- "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 4/8, 15, 22 & 29.
- Prayer Group via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) 10:30 a.m. Fridays 4/9, 16, 23 & 30. Contact Pastor Paul or Deacon Gale to add or remove names from the church's Prayer Lists.
- Sundays of Easter services Facebook Live 9:30 a.m. & Drive-in with Holy Communion in the Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. 4/11, 18 & 25.
- Mary Martha Bible Study via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952) 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays 4/13 & 27.
- Metropolitan New York Synod Dean's Meeting via Zoom from 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Tuesday 4/20.
- Congregation Council Meeting via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826) at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday 4/20.



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 & www.mnys.org

Office 631-473-2236

Cell 347-423-3623

Rev. Paul Downing, Pastor

pastorpauldowning@yahoo.com

www.StPaulsLCPJS.org

St. Paul's Evangelical

Lutheran Church

309 Patchogue Road

Port Jefferson Station

NY 11776