



The Epistle

Risk-Taking to Know Scripture and Each Other

Sometimes you might find yourself wishing that the ELCA would take a stance on certain issues so that congregations and individuals wouldn't have to go through the difficult and sometimes painful process of deciding. Articulating our convictions and seeking to understand others' is hard work and isn't without the risk of discovering that we disagree. Our ability as a congregation, however, to make decisions for how to live out the Gospel in our location is something about which many of us actually feel very passionate. Our constitution and governance ensure this independence; it stems from Martin Luther's teaching of the importance of lay people holding their clergy accountable to accurately preaching the Gospel.

For all of these reasons, the ELCA is not structured as a top-down organization. Although we have bishops who are called to oversee the administration of a synod, each congregation must discern how it will live out the Gospel in its ministries. The Conference of Bishops and Churchwide Assembly (voting members from all 65 synods) do not dictate a stance for all congregations on issues. Instead, these bodies work with theologians to create Social Statements which articulate the breadth and depth of faith perspectives of Lutherans in the ELCA. These Social Statements weave together Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, and human experi-

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VALLEY INTER-FAITH DONATION ITEMS OF THE MONTH



The donation items for Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center this month are **toothpaste and toothbrushes**.

Report from previous months: In November you gave 98 cans of meat or tuna, 4 jars peanut butter and jelly and 1 bottle salad dressing. Thank you for your generosity!

Risk-Taking

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ence and reason. As such, the Social Statements “are teaching and policy documents that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life.”¹ They model how Christians in the same church can honor each other’s differing faith convictions while still upholding their own.

While there are some among us who sometimes feel frustrated with the ELCA’s policies or governance, there are also a great many of us who have expressed frustration with not knowing those policies, the function of synod or church-wide, or our congregation’s connection with the larger church. Part of the letter of call which you issued me when I first came to St. Paul’s instructed me to promote connection with the ELCA, and when I was installed as pastor, I promised to preach and teach in accordance with the holy scriptures and with the confessions of the Lutheran church.

In attempt to fulfill this call, we will endeavor to study the Social Statements of the ELCA during Bible study and adult forum this winter and spring. The statements include such topics as: Care of Creation, Abortion, Race/Ethnicity/Culture, Economics, Human Sexuality, and Criminal Justice.

I do not pretend that these topics are easy to discuss. I am, however, confident that while you may discover that you disagree with fellow brothers and sisters, you will also discover that you feel more closely connected to them and clearer about your own convictions after participating in this Bible study. Sunday and Tuesday mornings and Monday evenings beginning the week of January 12.

In Christ,
Pastor Emily Beckering

¹ https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements?_ga=2.203215572.435165371.1576503686-486901915.1576503686

Celebrations in January



- 4 Erin Detzen,
Jack Moorhouse
- 10 Rick Hedges
- 14 Michelle Flege Hollon
- 18 Jeff Ford, Chris Geiger
- 21 Sherry Bronner,
Janet King
- 23 Kathryn Keith, Ali Truax
- 24 Christian Lohmeier
- 28 Mathea Harbaugh
- 29 Chandler Clemmons
- 30 Jamie Hirt, Robyn Reed

THE GATHERING

Save the date for Sunday, January 25 for the **WHOLE CONGREGATION** event of a service project and a movie.



ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is on January 26 after worship. We will discuss 2019 financials and plans for ministry in 2020.

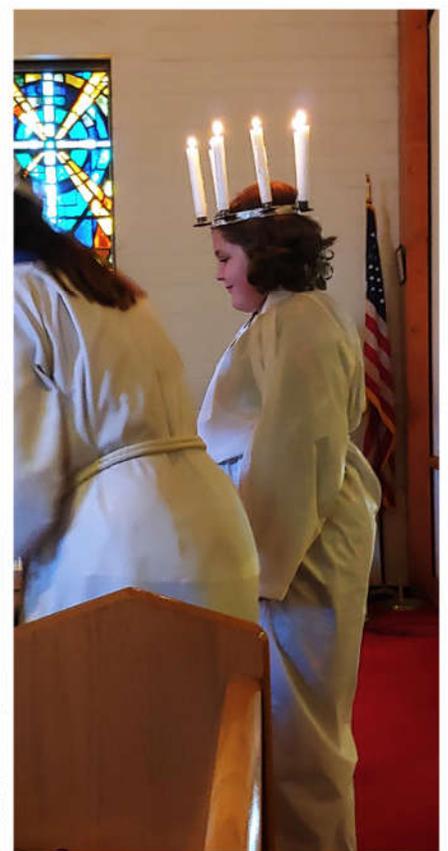
Stewardship Opportunities This Month

JANUARY: Stewardship is planning all of life with Christ at the center.			
BODY	MIND	SPIRIT/FAITH	RELATIONSHIPS
Chair Volleyball	Do a Christian word search or brain puzzle	ELCA Social Statement Bible Study	The Gathering
FINANCES	NEIGHBOR	RESOURCES	PRAY FOR THESE MINISTRIES AND LEADERS
Annual Meeting	Item of the Month: Toothbrushes and toothpaste	Read the annual report so that you know the ministry plans for 2020.	Council President, Jane Owen, Finance Committee

Live Nativity (Dec. 7)



Advent Visitors at St. Paul (Dec. 1, 8, 15)



Happy Hollandaise! (Dec. 6-15)



Happy Hollandaise! (Dec. 6-15)



From the Presiding Bishop: “Midnight Stillness”

This article by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton was originally published in the December 2019 issue of *Living Lutheran*.



On Christmas Eve, there always comes a time when everything is finally still. Once all the preparations and decorations, extra choir rehearsals and Christmas pageants, shopping and holiday parties have been completed, peace descends.

For me, that time always came after the 11 p.m. candlelight service. After the congregation went home, after I

turned off the lights and locked the doors, as my daughters and I drove home through the dark and quiet streets, I would then settle into silence. Once home and after my husband and children went to bed, I could continue in that Christmas Eve stillness and reflect on the mystery of Advent and Christmas.

Advent—a season of expectation. God is up to something. We are urged to watch and wait. “Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isaiah 40:9). “At midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’” (Matthew 25:6).

There are Advent calendars, with each opened window drawing one closer to Christmas. Advent wreaths light the way. In Cleveland in the late ’50s and early ’60s, every child would rush home from school to catch Mr. Jingeling on TV. (Trust me, every Clevelander of a certain age can sing the Mr. Jingeling song.)

Advent is our time and is filled with longing—for peace, for a just world, for restored relationships, for God. The Advent lessons from the prophet Isaiah are filled with the sorrow of exile and the persistent hope that God still cares for God’s people and will bring about their return to Israel. We sing, “Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 254).

And come Jesus does, into our world and into our lives. For a brief time, generosity and goodwill break out. We wish strangers a “Merry Christmas.” We even practice a little patience in traffic and with relatives. Life is filled with possibility.

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From the Presiding Bishop: “Midnight Stillness”

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I think about all these things in the midnight stillness of Christmas Eve. I consider the miracle of the incarnation—that God is ever faithful; that God is not far off but is Emmanuel, God with us; that in Jesus the Divine set aside all glory in order to take on our nature and be truly glorified on the cross. A helpless baby in a wooden manger, a broken man on a cross—these are the gifts of Christmas.

The Christmas carol declares that the angels’ announcement to the shepherds “came upon the midnight clear” (*ELW*, 282). All of creation became the land of the midnight Son. The good earth and all its creatures, sun and moon, and stars and planets orbit in harmony around this center of love.

In the stillness, I think of another midnight—the Easter Vigil. It is the first celebration of the resurrection. In the vigil these words of the Exsultet (Easter proclamation) are sung: “This is the night when Christ, the Life, rose from the dead. The seal of the grave is broken and the morning of a new creation breaks forth out of night.” All Advent expectations and longings are met and exceeded. The ephemeral peace and hope we may feel at Christmas take substance and permanence. God’s promise has been fulfilled.

There is a lot for the Christ child to do before the work on earth is done. Jesus will grow into adulthood. He will teach and feed and heal. Jesus will suffer the betrayal of his friends and will die that we might live. I think about this on Christmas Eve and pray, “Rest now, dear midnight Son.”

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Our Life Together

For emergency pastoral care, please call Pastor Emily Beckering, 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, call Penny Huber, 513-931-6420. To remove people from the list, contact the office.

We pray for **Annabelle** (daughter of friends of Katie Schieman); **Mary and her granddaughter Kyra** (friend of Paul Pieper); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Louise Barry**; **Bobby** (Christian Lohmeier's friend); **Brent and Katie** (friends of Elinor Schieman's granddaughter); **Brett** (Kings' step-nephew); **Jodie Calhoun**; **Bob Cathcart** (John's father); **Christian**; **Kathy Curless**; **George Demetriades** (Portmanns' friend); **Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Dick** (Linda Miller's brother); **Jeremy Doan** (Jean Winkle's grandson); **Jerry Doan** (Jean Winkle's son-in-law); **Norb Eble** (Portmanns' friend); **Eckerle and Wuestefeld families**; **Lee Erbeck**; **Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Jeanne Fuller**; **Jason Garcia** (Mayhughs' nephew); **Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **Kristy Georgiton** (Terri DeAngelis's daughter); **Hannah**; **Matthew Harrison** (Seals' neighbor); **Elain Heskamp**; **Andrew Horton**; **Ellen Hunter** (Jeni Cathcart's grandmother); **Joan** (Penny Huber's friend); **Kate** (granddaughter of Dennis King's friend); **Dennis King**; **Jay King** (son of Jamie King, who cleans the church); **Stan Kline**; **Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Lewis Laine** (Chet Laine's brother); **Richard Lane** (Elinor Schieman's nephew); **Regina Laursen** (Portmanns' friend); **Nick Mayer** (Elinor Schieman's grandson-in-law); **Carroll Mayhugh Sr.** (Carroll Mayhugh's father); **Samantha Mersch** (Mayhughs' daughter, Sarah Papin's sister); **Jessica Mink** (Donald Harris's cousin); **Doris Minton**; **Barbara and Jack Moorhouse**; **Jean Nolte**; **Richard Osborn** (Betty Pack's brother); **Rosie Osborn** (Betty Pack's sister); **Eric Papin**; **Don Pflieger** (Kings' brother-in-law); **Linda Perin**

(Moorhouses' cousin); **Paul Pieper**; **Faith Pirrmann**; **Bob Portmann**; **James Savoy** (Jean Winkle's great-grandson); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills' cousin); **Sheila Schultz** (Betty Pack's friend); **Shannon and Dane** (friends of Riddle family); **Keith Shupe** (father of Kelly Shupe); **Jason Simpson** (Freda Faulkner's grand-nephew); **Elizabeth Smith** (Elain Heskamp's sister); **Scott Songer**; **Judy Songer** (friends of Jean Winkle); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans' grandson); **Jack Spelman**; **Nancy Stirnkorb** (friend of Terri DeAngelis); **Susan** (Elinor Schieman's niece); **Britney Jean Teems** (Jean Winkle's granddaughter); **Randy Thaman** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Ralph Turner** (friend of Dennis King); **Jack Wagner**; **Daryl Wesselman** (Betty Pack's granddaughter); **Susan Winkle** (Jean Winkle's daughter-in-law).

We pray for those with ongoing health concerns who are unable to come to church every week: **Dottie Bangert**, **Louise Barry**, **Carol Leonard**, **Jack and Barbara Moorhouse**, **Jean Nolte**, **Heather Segar**.

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords' neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman's grandson); **Jared Forst** (Jim and Loretta's grandson); **Beau Glenn** (Karen Koehl's son-in-law); **Kylie Hahn** (Gretta Hahn's granddaughter); **Donald Hosea** (Karen Koehl's son); **Samuel McLoughlin** (friend of Cindy Sieckman); **Scott Minton** (Doris Minton's son); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey**; **Mack Thompson** (Freda Faulkner's grandson); **Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

January Ministry Schedule

	During the Service (10:30 a.m.)	Education Hour (9:00 a.m.)
Month-Long Ministries	<p>Bulletins: Carole Replogle and Linda Miller</p> <p>Altar Guild: <i>Linens:</i> Nancy Erbeck; <i>Setup:</i> Carole Replogle; <i>Cleanup:</i> Linda Lawson</p> <p>Counter: Jim Miller</p>	<p>Teacher, Ages 3-7: Sarah Papin</p> <p>Teacher, Ages 8-11: Nancy Erbeck</p> <p>Teacher, Jr/Sr High: Donald Harris</p>
January 5 Epiphany	<p>Assisting Minister: Terry McDowell</p> <p>Acolyte: Alanna Cathcart</p> <p>Communion Ministers: Chelsea King</p> <p>Nursery: Jeni Cathcart, Shirley Harbaugh</p> <p>Activity Time: Bridget Cathcart, Bess Sturgill</p>	<p>Assistant, Ages 3-7: Kim Coulehan</p> <p>Assistant, Ages 8-11: Jim Sturgill</p> <p>Assistant, Jr/Sr High: Chrissy Harris</p>
January 12 Baptism of Our Lord	<p>Assisting Minister: Nancy Erbeck</p> <p>Acolyte: Bridget Cathcart</p> <p>Communion Ministers: Ron & Shirley Harbaugh</p> <p>Nursery: Jeni Cathcart, Kim Coulehan</p> <p>Activity Time: John Cathcart, Joyce McDowell</p>	
January 19 2 Epiphany	<p>Assisting Minister: Donald Harris</p> <p>Acolyte: Katie Sturgill</p> <p>Communion Minister: Pat Coldiron</p> <p>Nursery: Taylor Beckering, Bess Sturgill</p> <p>Activity Time: Becky Betsch, Penny Huber</p>	<p>Assistant, Ages 3-7: Kim Coulehan</p> <p>Assistant, Ages 8-11: Jim Sturgill</p> <p>Assistant, Jr/Sr High: Chrissy Harris</p>
January 26 3 Epiphany	<p>Assisting Minister: Leandra Hawkins</p> <p>Acolyte: Donny Cathcart</p> <p>Book Bearer: Maci Lawson</p> <p>Communion Minister: Carolyn Koehl</p> <p>Nursery: Kim Coulehan, Joyce McDowell</p> <p>Activity Time: Bridget Cathcart, John Cathcart</p>	<p>Assistant, Ages 3-7: Jeni Cathcart</p> <p>Assistant, Ages 8-11: Jim Sturgill</p> <p>Assistant, Jr/Sr High: Chrissy Harris</p>

St. Paul
Lutheran Church

As a community of Christian believers, we are called by God to use the many gifts He has given us, within the church and the community, so others may come to know Him.

Jacob's Porch Campus Ministry

We are your Lutheran Campus Ministry serving college students throughout Central Ohio. Consider giving a financial gift today to invest in the spiritual grounding of students as they experience the uprooting that comes with college life. Jacob's Porch alumni are currently filling our seminaries, our Lutheran pulpits and church councils, the ELCA Church-wide council and serving in a myriad of ways in the world. What better gift than the rich planting soil that is cultivated through campus ministry for those in that pivotal time of their teens and twenties? You can give online at jacobsporch.com or donate via Text To Give: text "give 25" to 614-505-4358 to give \$25. Any amount is accepted via text. Thank you! Have a Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!

Grant Eckhart
Pastor, Jacob's Porch

St. Paul
Lutheran Church

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