



The Epistle

“Where Each is LOVED.”

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROPOSED MISSION STATEMENT

Love is a basic human need. We all need to receive and to give love. As the Apostle Paul says, “Without love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). Jesus’ New Commandment given on Maundy Thursday at the Last Supper is to “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Love is central to the Christian faith and life.



Love is central to our life together at St. Paul’s. We strongly feel the gift and call that Jesus gives us to love one another. It is for this reason that Council is proposing the adoption of a mission statement which highlights this essential calling, and which is also part of the nature and character of this congregation. Council has discerned that “Growing a community where each is valued, accepted, and LOVED,” is at once deeply needed by our neighbors in Reading and a true capacity of this congregation.

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“Where Each is LOVED.”

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We often are prompted to think of love in February because of Valentine’s Day. Perhaps you learned at some point in your faith formation that in the New Testament, there are different words for love. “Eros” is the Greek word for romantic love, the kind that we often think of on Valentine’s Day. “Philia” is the Greek word for the bond shared between friends. “Agape” is the unconditional love and unwavering commitment of God. The verb “agapao” actually means, “To be well pleased, contented with someone.” Whether or not you have a significant other, you have the unconditional love

This issue of the Epistle is full of opportunities for how you can respond to God’s love for you in Christ Jesus. You are invited to read on and engage.

VALLEY INTERFAITH DONATION ITEM OF THE MONTH

This month’s donation item for Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center is **all-purpose cleaner**.

of God who is so committed to you and to this whole world that Jesus laid down his life in order that you might never be separated from that love. God is well pleased with you.

This issue of the Epistle is full of opportunities for how you can respond to God’s love for you in Christ Jesus. You are invited to read on and engage.

In our life together, we share the bond of friendship, and we strive to love one another unconditionally. By our actions, involvement in our surrounding community, and mission support shared with the greater Church, we seek to share God’s love with the world. We don’t always live this out perfectly. When we fail, we ask for forgiveness and the help of the Holy Spirit to shape us to love like Jesus. We have a vision of a community where each person involved really does experience the love of Jesus.

“Where each is LOVED.” That is a mission well worth the effort. That is a mission we can all get behind. That is a mission that we each need. So does the world.

In Christ,
Pastor Emily Beckering

Love God's Creation

HOW WE SHARED GOD'S LOVE THROUGH THE GIFT OF A SHEEP



This last year we collected \$120 in our quarter tube located in the narthex, which was used in December by the Social Concerns Committee to purchase a sheep. This sheep will provide a family

with wool to use and sell as they care for this sheep as a member of God's creation. These donations are sent to Heifer International to end hunger and poverty in developing countries. Thank you for making God's love tangible by your quarter donations.

Zoom Invitation for Jan. 30 Annual Meeting

Topic: Annual Congregational Meeting

Time: Jan 30, 2022 11:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85821298355?pwd=R3NTTttdONjVjZHBhRm05SjhEckV5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 2129 8355

Passcode: 189355

Join by touch-tone phone by dialing one of the below numbers and entering the Meeting ID and passcode when prompted:

312-626-6799 US (Chicago)

646-558-8656 US (New York)



**ANNUAL
MEETING**

**ANNUAL
MEETING—
SUNDAY, JAN. 30**

Please plan to attend in person or virtually our Annual Meeting following worship on January 30. We will discuss financials as well as vote on the proposed Mission and Vision Statements for our Congregation. This will be a joyous conversation you won't want to miss!

Please see the Zoom invitation at left if you wish to attend remotely. (The Zoom link will also be sent out via email, along with electronic copies of all the meeting documents.)

Love Our Youth

FUNDRAISERS IN FEBRUARY: SEND OUR YOUTH TO ELCA NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING THIS SUMMER



Kiss-O-Grams: For the next two weekends, you can send a chocolate kiss to a brother or sister in Christ at St. Paul's with a donation to the youth group. The chocolates will be delivered during worship the Sunday right before Valentine's Day, February 13.

Talent Show February 26: The youth group is hosting a talent show at 5 pm, Saturday, February 26. If you'd like to share a talent, please sign up on the sign up board in the narthex. If you'd like to attend, please consider offering a donation.

Love the Lord with All your Mind

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION—FAITH AND FILM FRIDAYS @ 7PM



To grow in faith and discipleship this month, in addition to Thursday morning

ing Bible studies on upcoming Sunday Scripture passages, we will also offer an opportunity to watch the television series *The Chosen* and discuss its content in community. *The Chosen* is a multi-season series about the life of Christ; it features stories from the gospels, but artistically expands the storytelling by imagining how Jesus was experienced by those he taught and healed. Though not all aspects of the stories are scripturally verifiable, the series creates opportunity for

discussion. Friday nights in February from 7-8:30 pm. Popcorn provided!

For those who are unable to attend in person, you can download the free *The Chosen* App, or watch it online ahead of time, and then Zoom-in for the discussion using the Bible Study Zoom information below. Discussion will begin at 8 pm and conclude by 8:30 pm.

ZOOM DISCUSSION INVITATION

Bible Study/*The Chosen* Series Discussion

Time: Fridays @ 8 pm in February

Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85812934086?pwd=engxL0xEUktFUW9YRmh0d2l2Vzg5dz09>

Meeting ID: 858 1293 4086

Passcode: 838917

From the Presiding Bishop: “God has Given Us a Mission”

LOVE THE WORLD BY REACHING MORE PEOPLE WITH JESUS’ LOVE

This article was originally published in the November 2021 issue of Living Lutheran magazine.

Remember the Beatles? John, Paul, George, Ringo! I was into it. I had Beatle boots, love beads and granny glasses. My big brother gave me a model of Paul (the cute Beatle) for Christmas one year. It was one of those paint-it-yourself kits. I knew the lyrics to the Beatles’ hits better than I knew Martin Luther’s Small Catechism. The early hits were pop and upbeat: “I Want to Hold Your Hand,” “A Hard Day’s Night.” Even later “Yellow Submarine” was still whimsical.

But then the Beatles got older, and the world changed. Vietnam, the Kennedy and King assassinations, the urban riots, the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. Innocence—for those of us who had that luxury—was gone. Skepticism, even cynicism, was the lens through which the world was seen. A lot was broken, including trust in institutions and the church.

God has a different way. It is the way of Jesus. It is the way of love... God so loves the world and all of creation and all of us.

In 1971, John Lennon’s hit “Imagine” came out. It was evocative and, I’m sure, was meant to point us to the possibility of a better future. I found it disturbing. A world without religion. No heaven. No hell. No countries. No possessions. As if excising these things would cure humanity and the world would be as one.

There was and is enough brokenness in the world to go ’round. But the brokenness is not outside of us—in institutions, politics, religion—it is within us. The only way to construct utopia is to get rid of people. Imagine.

Except God has a different way. It is the way of Jesus. It is the way of love. It is the way of life. You see, God so loves the world and all of creation and all of us. God is right down with us in all of our messiness. In Jesus, God has reconciled the world to God’s self, redeeming it and us in spite of our rebellion. We can stake our lives on the relentless, faithful, powerful, tender love of God.

During the pandemic we dreamed great things and imagined an ELCA that could envision a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation. We prayed and still pray that the Spirit will activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.

(Continued on page 7)

Love Your Neighbors as Yourself

This is a story of how the mission support we share with the greater Church in the ELCA extends God's love to our neighbors.



Emily Norris had been serving at Augsburg Lutheran Church's winter-overflow home-

less shelter in Winston-Salem, N.C., for a few years when she heard the rumblings. Many of the guests opened up to her, told her stories. One need kept arising.

"I heard very loudly that there was a deep hunger for a faith community that looked like them," Norris said. They craved space where they could worship God and not feel judged for their housing status, their past or their appearance. Heeding their calls led Norris to Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, to become a pastor.

By 2020, Norris was ordained and serving as the mission developer for the Dwelling, an ELCA faith community designed for, but not exclusive to, people in Winston-Salem who are or have been homeless. Funding comes from partnerships with Augsburg, the North Carolina Synod, the Moravian Church in America and the ELCA churchwide organization, which draws on Mission Support for the Dwelling's grant.

Starting a church during a pandemic wasn't ideal. Safety restrictions made worship impossible, and the population Norris had hoped to reach became especially vulnerable. So she did what many ELCA leaders and congregations were forced to do: she pivoted.

After assessing community needs, Norris determined that free mobile showers would be the Dwelling's anchor ministry. Visitors could take showers and receive clean underwear, socks and T-shirts donated by nearby members of the Dwelling's synod.

"It was really a profound way to start," Norris said. "Showers provide a sense of dignity and are therapeutic. I don't know a better way to remind people of their baptism."

Eventually the showers became permanent, with participants volunteering to help the program. By Christmas Eve, area restrictions for gatherings had been relaxed, and Norris held the Dwelling's first service. In January 2021, it began offering regular Sunday worship.

With a living room for its sanctuary, couches and chairs for its pews, and free-flowing food, the Dwelling takes seriously its mission of hospitality. "It has a feather touch, where you can come in and get comfy," said member Cheryl Morrison. "It's OK to talk to the person next to you, get up to get a cup of coffee, doughnut or muffin."

"This is a church for God's people — the homeless — and they are the foundation of what makes this church work, which in my eyes is extremely special;" added Ryan Sprinkle, a council member. "You have people right off the street with their backpacks."

Celebrations in February



- 1 William Harrison,
Matthew Lawson,
Jim Miller
- 2 Kathy Crosby

- 8 Les Eckerle
- 10 Jeni Cathcart
- 11 Ron & Shirley Harbaugh**
- 12 Joyce Spelman
- 13 Eric Bardes,
Kyle Kreiner
- 15 Joe & Elain Heskamp**
- 16 Shirley Lathrop

- 18 Kris Kreiner
- 19 Rachel Bronner
- 20 Penny Huber
- 21 Bryana Bronner
- 22 Diana Hawkins
- 24 Erika Ford, Jillian Ford,
Beth Wernery
- 26 Jack & Mary Wagner**

From the Presiding Bishop: “God has Given Us a Mission”

(Continued from page 5)

And we set a goal—engage a million new, young and diverse people by the end of this decade. Why? Because the world deserves to hear the gospel. The world needs to look beyond itself. There is a heaven.

Clearly this is not the work of the church-wide organization alone, nor of any one congregation. It is a mission for all of us. There are so many people who do not know that they need to know Jesus. There are so many people who think that God’s grace is too good to be true. There are so many people searching for meaning. All are beloved by God. God longs to draw all people to Godself, to clean us up and wash our faces so that God’s image shines clearly from all of us, so that we can see God’s image shining from each other.

New, young and diverse? What about those of us who are already here, have always been here, who have been doing the work and paying the bills? We are the 99 sheep that didn’t go astray. We are the older brother who stayed home and worked hard. Of course we are!

We have lived in the love of Jesus and walked in Jesus’ way. We know the freedom of the Christian. We don’t live in an unforgiving world, but in a redeemed world with a future. Why wouldn’t we want to share that with as many people as we can?

Even a million new, young and diverse people—why stop there? The flock was not whole until the one lost was found. The older brother did not realize that all his father had was already his as a gift. This is true for us. God has given this mission to invite more people into the way of Jesus. Imagine.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

Love God's Mission at St. Paul's

COUNCIL CORNER

This month Church Council

- Reviewed our COVID-19 protocols and reaffirmed offering in-person worship and ministry in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Began planning a Church Committee Fair for the Spring to connect members and visitors with opportunities to share their talents and spiritual gifts for God's mission in the world.
- Revised our existing guidelines to ensure the safety of our youth and to more clearly respond to any registered sex offender who wishes to attend worship services or to participate in church activities.
- Grew excited at the prospect of the new cameras designed to improve livestreaming quality being installed in the sanctuary this February.
- Agreed to charter a troop for girls and a venture crew for older teens with the Dan Beard Council of the Boy Scouts of America. This aligns with our goals in the strategic plan for engaging in the local community.

Love Your Church

NEW COMMUNICATIONS OPTIONS KEEP YOU IN TOUCH WITH ST. PAUL'S

Prayer Chain

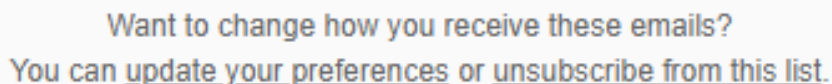
Would you like to have the opportunity to pray for your sisters and brothers in Christ in times of need? [Click here](#) to sign up for the Prayer Chain online, or sign up in person at the annual meeting to be informed of prayer requests.

New Email List: "Church Business Only"

By popular demand, we are now making it easier to choose how often you want to get email from St. Paul's!

If you scroll all the way down to the bottom of any email we sent through the mailing list, you'll see a line that looks like this picture:

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Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

Click on "update your preferences" and it will take you to a web page where you can choose to be on the "All Announcements" list or the "Church Business Only" list.

The "Church Business Only" option means you'll receive only notices of congregation meetings and special meetings. Choosing "All Emails" will ensure that you receive all our announcements, including each week's bulletin and livestream links.

Right now everyone on our mailing list is signed up for "All Emails." You can change your preferences at any time!

Please call the office if you have questions or need help with the email.

St. Paul Lutheran Church

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mail@stpaulreading.org
stpaulpastor@gmail.com

February 2022

Mission Statement

Christians using God's gifts
 helping others know Him

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| Jan. 30 4 Epiphany 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) 9 am Adult Forum 10:30 am Worship After Worship: Annual Cong. Meeting | Jan. 31 6 pm - 8 pm Visitation for Ruth Lohmeier at Spring Grove Funeral Home, 10980 Reading Road, Cincinnati | Feb. 1 10 am Funeral for Ruth Lohmeier at St. Michael Catholic Church, 11144 Spinner Ave., Sharonville | 2 7 pm Bell Choir | 3 10:30 am Bible Study 5 pm - 7 pm Visitation for Lee Erbeck at Vorhis & Ryan Funeral Homes, 310 Dunn Street, Lockland 6:30 pm Worship and Music Committee (Zoom) | 4 10 am Brief visitation for Lee Erbeck (at St. Paul) 11 am Funeral service for Lee Erbeck (at St. Paul) 7 pm Faith & Film Fridays: <i>The Chosen</i> | 5 10 am Cub Scouts Pinewood Derby |
| 6 5 Epiphany 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) 9 am Adult Forum 10:30 am Worship After Worship: Evangelism Committee | 7 5:30 pm Confirmation Class | 8 | 9 4 pm Stewardship Committee (Zoom) 7 pm Bell Choir | 10 10:30 am Bible Study 6 pm Scouts BSA | 11 7 pm Faith & Film Fridays: <i>The Chosen</i> | 12 |
| 13 6 Epiphany 10:30 am Worship | 14 | 15 | 16 7 pm Bell Choir | 17 NO BIBLE STUDY | 18 7 pm Faith & Film Fridays: <i>The Chosen</i> | 19 1 pm Gather Cincinnati Young Adults Group |
| 20 7 Epiphany 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) NO Adult Forum 10:30 am Worship | 21 7 pm Council Meeting **Epistle Articles Due** | 22 5:30 pm Confirmation Class | 23 7 pm Bell Choir | 24 10:30 am Bible Study 6 pm Scouts BSA | 25 7 pm Faith & Film Fridays: <i>The Chosen</i> | 26 5 pm Youth Group Talent Show |
| 27 Transfiguration 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) 9 am Adult Forum 10:30 am Worship | 28 | March 1 | Mar. 2 Ash Wednesday 7 pm Worship with Holy Communion | March 3 10:30 am Bible Study | March 4 | March 5 |

Our Life Together

For emergency pastoral care, please call the after-hours line at 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, or to remove a person from the list, please contact the office at 513-821-0987 or mail@stpaulreading.org.

We pray for **Armstrong family** (friends of Hubers); **Samantha Asbrock** (Marie Calhoun's friend); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Jeannie Allen** (Faith Pirrmann's friend); **Pr. Lisa Bernheisel; Louise Barry; Teresa Bell** (former member); **Chrissi Bergt** (Kate Wollenburg's cousin); **Stephen Black** (Kim Coulehan's nephew); **Bobby** (Christian Lohmeier's friend); **Brett** (Kings' step-nephew); **Nicole Bucknam** (friend of Millers); **Jodie Calhoun; Kay Callahan** (Linda Miller's friend); **John Cathcart; Christian; Sandy Cordes; Kathy Curless; Doug Dahlien** (Harbaughs' nephew); **Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Jeremy Doan** (Jean Winkle's grandson); **Jane Erbeck; Nancy Erbeck; Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Cindy Flege; Lee Frank** (Barbara Moorhouse's niece's husband); **Jeanne Fuller; Scarlett Gally** (Beth Wernery's great-niece); **Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **Nathaniel Gibson** (Les Eckerle's step-nephew); **Steve Gollehon** (Elinor Schieman's cousin); **Don Grau; Jim Hammerling** (Portmanns' son-in-law); **Hannah; Sandy Hatcher** (Linda Holt's sister); **Elain Heskamp; Andrew Horton; Steve Huitger and family** (Nick's father); **Ellen Hunter** (Jeni Cathcart's grandmother); **Jo and her daughter** (Jeanne Fuller's friends); **Joan** (Penny Huber's friend); **Kate** (granddaughter of Dennis King's friend); **Ken Keith** (Kris Keith's dad); **Chelsea King; Dennis King; Janet King; Earl (Buddy) King** (Dennis's brother); **Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Tom and Mike Kozee and family** (friends of Faith Pirrmann); **Chet Laine; Lewis Laine** (Chet Laine's brother); **Kelsee Lainhart** (friend of Kings); **Nelson Langefeld; Eli Liffick; Yvonne Lowery** (St. Paul Players); **Carroll Mayhugh Sr.** (Carroll Mayhugh's father); **Cindy Mayhugh; Jennifer Mayhugh & family** (Mayhughs' niece-in-law); **Samantha Mersch** (Mayhughs' daughter, Sarah Papin's sister); **Jack Miller** (Becky Betsch's uncle); **Mary Mills** (St. Paul Players); **Jessica Mink** (Donald Harris's cousin); **Barbara Moorhouse; Jean Nolte; Ervin, Carol, Jim, and Jeannie Oerther** (Portmanns' sister and family); **Ann Ohr** (Barbara Moorhouse's cousin); **Richard Os-**

born (Betty Pack's brother); **Rosie Osborn** (Betty Pack's sister); **Tom Pack** (Betty Pack's son); **Eric Papin; Christian & Suzie Pereira** (Carolyn Koehl's granddaughter & grandson-in-law); **Ginny Pape; Linda Perin** (Moorhouses' cousin); **Monette and Jay Pillow** (Portmanns' friends); **Cathern Pirrmann** (Adam and Nick's aunt); **Faith Pirrmann; Nick Pirrmann; Pat Popplewell** (Dennis King's friend); **Pr. Pete and Joyce Rudowski; Judy Saaranen** (Portmanns' friend); **Heather Segar; James Savoy** (Jean Winkle's great-grandson); **Scott Schadel** (friend of McDowells); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills' cousin); **Sheila Schultz** (Betty Pack's friend); **Shannon and Dane** (friends of Riddle family); **Shear family** (Kings' daughter & son-in-law); **Kate Sheridan** (Kings' family friend); **Keith Shupe** (father of Kelly Shupe); **John Smith** (Elain Heskamp's brother); **Scott Songer; Judy Songer** (friends of Jean Winkle); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans' grandson); **Kathy Spelman and family** (Joyce's sister-in-law); **Frank Sturgill** (Jim's dad); **Britney Jean Teems** (Jean Winkle's granddaughter); **Randy Thaman** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Geri Toland** (Carole Replogle's neighbor); **Treasure** (Les Eckerle's cousin); **Ralph Turner** (friend of Dennis King); **Jack Wagner; Jeanne Wagner; Daryl Wesselman** (Betty Pack's granddaughter); **Liviah Widders** (Portmanns' family friend); **Leslie Willet; Jean Winkle; Susan Winkle** (Jean Winkle's daughter-in-law).

At the death of: **Ruth Lohmeier, Lee Erbeck.**

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

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords' neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman's grandson); **Victoria Derry** (Elinor Schieman's great-granddaughter); **Jared Forst** (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** (Becky Betsch's brother); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey; Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

February Ministry Schedule

| Date | Assisting Minister | Livestreamer | Lesson Reader | Greeter |
|---------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Feb. 6 | Noah Moorhouse | John Cathcart | Sherry Bronner | Nelson Langefeld |
| Feb. 13 | Terry McDowell | Patrick Cathcart | John Cathcart | TBA |
| Feb. 20 | Nancy Erbeck | Nick Huitger | Chet Laine | TBA |
| Feb. 27 | John Cathcart | Noah Moorhouse | Sherry Bronner | TBA |

Love the Lord with All Your Heart and Soul

LOOKING FORWARD TO LENT



Feed your faith, heart, and soul! Lent begins March 2 with Ash Wednesday. St. Paul's will offer in-person and livestreamed worship services on Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week.

This Lent, we are working in partnership with our sisters and brothers in Christ in ELCA congregations in the Cincinnati Conference to do joint midweek Lenten services. For the five Wednesdays in Lent (after Ash Wednesday), we will only be virtual, and we will worship jointly with our sisters and brothers in Cincinnati by sharing the

link to a worship service from a different congregation in our conference. This experience is something to which to look forward; it is a chance to connect with other Christians and to be encouraged by the Holy Spirit's work in the Greater Church.

FAITH AND FILM FRIDAYS

St. Paul Lutheran Church

*Mission
Statement:*

Christians
using God's
gifts helping
others know
him.

*Join us every Friday evening
in February to watch and dis-
cuss this sweeping TV adapta-
tion of the life of Christ. More
info on p. 4!*

The CHOSEN



St. Paul Lutheran Church

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE