

The Herald February 2021

Grace and peace to you from our Savior Jesus Christ!

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

This text from Paul's letter to the church in Corinth stood out to me this week as I have been reflecting on the many changes that we have endured, individually and collectively as a faith community over the past 12 months. In the midst of change, how have I - how have we - reflected God's glory? How has the change we each have experienced transformed us as a people and as Christians?

Transformation happens when we see things from a new perspective. That is, when we step back from our everyday lives and reflect, paying attention not only to what we do and why, but also how we feel about it. Reflections give us a different point of view. Everyone can reflect on change, but it is particularly powerful when you can link it to an experience. We have experienced much, dear ones, with a global pandemic, racial tension, political divides, economic struggles, new ways of worship and new ways of being in community.

Throughout human history there's been one overarching constant that's never changed or wavered and that's been the existence and presence of God on the earth. The bible tells us that God doesn't change and that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God is the firm ground that never shifts that you can lay the foundation of your entire life on and know that it won't slide out from underneath you when the storm comes.

The small changes that we all make may or may not be significant, but changing our approach to change can make a big difference. To get to this, reflection is necessary. When we reflect on our thoughts, emotions or actions, we create a small and safe observation space. Instead of being fused with our inner-life, this space allows for curiosity, critique and compassion.

We as people often neglect the power of self-reflection, yet, in the hardest times we need it more than ever. Self-reflection is a wide-ranging process in which you're not only aware of your thoughts, emotions, and feelings, but you're able to take corrective action to eliminate negative influences, be honest with yourself, and regain control of what you've let slip from your grasp.

As people, we're subjected to a lot we cannot control. Our current situation displays that prominently. Through self-reflection, you're able to properly and sort out what is and isn't in your control. That's perhaps the most beneficial aspect of self-reflection and one that is so often forgotten. Self-reflection allows us to come to peace with what we can't control and be honest with ourselves about what we can. Self-reflection leads to transformation.

I've used self-reflection in my life to manage my stress and anxiety, as I constantly was concerned about things I couldn't control. Through reflection, I am able to come to terms with not having complete control, lifting a massive weight off my shoulders. Reflection has also allowed me to see that I wasn't as helpless as I felt.

The leadership of St. Paul's has worked very hard to keep our focus on Jesus Christ and to lead the heart of our church toward the things that are on the heart of God. Because of that we can approach this next season with great faith and confidence breathed into us by the Holy Spirit.

Merciful God, who transcends all time, who created the stars and set them in place, you, who are ageless yet known in every age, grant me the grace to accept the changes that are happening. Empty my heart of anxiety, and fill it instead with wonder and awe. Release me from the chains of complacency, and bind me to your ever-moving Spirit. For you alone are eternal. You alone are enduring. You alone are the everlasting Lord. And in you alone will this restless world find peace. Amen.

God loves you and so do I, **Vicar Michelle**

Don't Forget !! St. Paul's web site -

The web address is www.stpaulswarren.org

Facebook – “St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Warren, IL”

Announcements, Encouragement, and Insights throughout the week

Lessons for the Month of February

Feb 7 – Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-11
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

Feb 14 – Transfiguration Of Our Lord

2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

Feb 21 – First Sunday In Lent

Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

Feb 28 – Second Sunday In Lent

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

SCRIPTURE READERS NEEDED!! *Worship includes the whole assembly – and we love to hear and see one another! You can choose to read in person, or record a video. Recordings can easily be made from your home and used in our Sunday service. Please consider serving the church with your gift of time and presence. Contact Linda Balbac or Vicar Michelle to sign up and coordinate the recording.*

St. Paul's Lutheran Church Council Meeting for December 16th, 2020.

Present: Vicar Michelle, Anita Fry, Roger Kent, Kathy McKee, Linda Balbac, Daylon Niemann, Danica Skattum. **Absent:** Carrie Harris

We started our meeting with devotion and prayers by Vicar Michelle.

Secretary's Report: Minutes were presented from Council Meeting of November 18th, 2020. Roger moved to accept the Secretary's Report. Danica seconded. Motion Passed.

Reminder, annual reports need to be sent to Anita by January 15th, 2021

Current Council: President; Kathy McKee, Vice President; Danica Skattum, Recording Secretary; Anita Fry, Treasurer; Carrie Harris, Financial Secretary; Roger Kent, Parish Education; Danica Skattum, Properties Committee; Daylon Niemann, Worship/Evangelism; Linda Balbac, Memorial Committee; Roger Kent, and Internship Committee; Kathy McKee.

Treasurer's Report: No report.

From our November 18th meeting, Sue Bourquin and Anita Fry have offered to take on the Treasurer's position in January 2021. Both will be signing checks and payment will be \$15/hour. Roger made a motion to approve.

Linda 2nd and motion carried. Danica Skattum will be added as a third person. Anita will go to Apple River Bank to check on how to proceed.

A laptop, printer, and Quick Books will be purchased to use at church for the Treasurers.

Committee Reports:

Parish Education:

- Will get information on the website for the Advent season.
- Looking for more intergenerational information to share with the students

Properties Committee:

- Replaced a thermostat.
- Still deciding on snow removal

Stewardship:

Worship/Evangelism: No report.

Memorial Committee: Roger reported a balance of \$10,259.31. Diane Niemann and Roger Kent should be listed to write checks.

Internship Committee: Met on December 3. Papers have been sent in. Our next meeting is January 14th at 6:30pm.

Welca: Checking: \$1,424.30, Savings: \$5,595.79

Pastor's Report:

- Worship has been limited to online only for the month of December. Printed worship materials are delivered to those who request them. The sanctuary is opened 10-12 Noon on Sundays for anyone who would like private prayer and reflection time. I am present during this time.
- Have been leading two Bible Study groups through Zoom – Tuesdays at 7pm and Wednesdays at 9:30am. Special to Advent, I am planning to offer the same during the season of Lent – once my class schedule can be confirmed. Facebook is kept active with daily reflective posts for Advent.
- On December 1st, I received approval for ordination from the synod candidacy committee pending graduation in the spring. Continue text study with an online group for sermon preparation.
- Attend board meetings for Sauk Valley Voices of Recovery, Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy, and the Center of Addiction and Faith. Another podcast was recorded for the Center of Addiction and Faith website. Classes conclude December 17th.
- Funeral for Marian Kent was held in the sanctuary November 27th, with the committal at Elmwood Cemetery
- Pastoral care has included phone calls, texts and emails to members and families in crisis.
- Confirmation class had a Zoom pizza party on November 28th with 8 students participating. Thank you to Kathy for picking up pizza coupons and to Casey's for donating them. Another Zoom is scheduled for December 27th for online trivia with youth and their families.
- Danica and I delivered 62 Advent Blessing Bags to member households.
- The Christmas Collection for the women's recovery home in Amboy will provide 15 blessing boxes with much needed items as an outreach ministry of our congregation. Boxes will be delivered December 28th.
- Thank you to Danica and Linda for reading scripture for online services.
- The service for Christmas Eve will be prerecorded and posted at 7pm.
- I am planning to take vacation time in January. To be decided.

Old Business: Our new custodian is Sarah Hill.

New Business: We discussed how to hold our annual meeting. Because we have a budget to vote on, an annual meeting needs to be held. January 13th, at 6:30pm is our next council meeting at which time we will go through the budget for 2021. On February 10th at 6:30pm, council will meet and approve the budget for 2021. This report will be mailed out to all along with a ballot. Our annual meeting will be Sunday, March 7th at 1pm. Hopefully, we will be able to gather or on-line will be available.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, January 13th at 6:30pm. We closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer.
Minutes submitted by Anita Fry

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE is Wednesday Feb. 17th this year, at 7 pm. Join us in our sanctuary OR ONLINE via Facebook for an ecumenical worship with Warren United Methodist Church. Vicar Michelle and Pastor Roger will be leading the service.

You are dust and to dust you shall return. Gen. 3:19

LENT
WALKING WITH CHRIST

We hope you'll join us for our mid-week services as we embark on this journey of Lent. **We will gather every Wednesday, beginning February 24th at 7 PM.** In person and online worship will be available. Join us for a special series *Making Change*.

Change is a constant in our lives. Some changes mark gradual transitions, as when daytime shifts toward twilight or winter turns to spring. Others happen in the blink of an eye, separating time into "before" and "after". We choose to undergo some changes after carefully considering our options, while others are forced upon us.

In the weeks, days, and hours before Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples also experienced change: a change of venue as the gates of Jerusalem approached; a change of plans as their long-awaited Messiah was arrested and tried; a change of circumstance as the crowds shouted "Crucify!"

Change is hard. We long for the expected and familiar, but all too often find ourselves in the midst of uncertainty and the unknown. We cannot predict how things will turn out. The hymnwriter Joachim Neander proclaimed God's steadfast love in the midst of life's inevitable changes: "All my hope on God is founded who will all my trust renew, who through change and chance will guide me, only good and only true. God unknown, God alone, call my heart to be thine own" (ELW 757).



Home Communion Offered:

Vicar Michelle is open to bringing you communion and offering a private time of prayer in your home, as you feel safe to do so. You may also make an appointment to meet privately at the sanctuary. Accommodations can be made to meet the health and safety considerations. For more information, you may call Vicar at 815-535-6177.

Church isn't where we go, Church is who we are!

While being mindful of the health and safety guidelines during this time of pandemic, we are staying connected as the Body of Christ through different ways to worship, and outreach opportunities.

Beginning Sunday February 7th, there will be the opportunity to gather for in person worship inside of the sanctuary at 10 am. Please see the in-person worship guidelines provided on our website.



Sunday mornings at 10 am worship will also be live streamed on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/stpaulswarrenil/>

In the event of internet disruption, a recorded video will be uploaded by 1 pm. Thank you for your grace as we work with new technology.

Worship videos are also uploaded to our web page <http://www.stpaulswarren.org/> and can be accessed by anyone without needing to be a Facebook user.

Every Sunday we will share together Holy Communion in our online worship service 10 am. For those worshipping at home: Before the time of the service you will want to prepare a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread to share and a cup or small cups of juice — perhaps grape or cranberry — or wine, with or without alcohol. Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you experience worship electronically with our faith community. Perhaps you want to put them on a lovely cloth or fabric that reminds you of a special time or person. Perhaps light a candle or place a flower or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup.



For anyone NOT connected to the internet, or who does not have the technology resources to join in worship online, please notify Vicar Michelle so other accommodations can be made.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS for MARCH 7th 2021 at 1:00 pm

The congregational meeting will be held in-person, in the sanctuary in accordance with health and safety concerns. You may choose to participate on-line via ZOOM by registering with Vicar Michelle.

The annual report will be mailed to each household two weeks prior to the congregational meeting for review. A mail in ballot will be provided to vote on the proposed budget in lieu of attending in person or on-line.

This plan has been carefully constructed by the church council to meet the needs of our congregation and attend to business matters of the church. It is our hope, that we may be able to safely gather for worship at that time, however with that uncertainty, we must plan accordingly.

DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL??????? If you have not been getting emails from Anita about announcements and worship, please share your email ASAP. We don't want to exclude anyone!

THANK YOU to our greeting card ladies who send notes of cheer, encouragement, and extended love through this ministry! Cards are sent for milestone birthdays, special events, and in sympathy. If someone you know from our congregation could use a personal note, or should be added to our birthday and anniversary list, please call the church office with that information.



Opportunities for outreach:

Food Pantry: The loss of unemployment, or limited employment has affected many families in our community. Financial gifts will help Caring Neighbors continue to meet many needs. Please continue to support our local food pantry by sending funds to St. Paul's Po Box 445, Warren, IL 61087 and note in the memo *Caring Neighbors*.

THANK YOU to our FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS God bless you in your ministry to feed our community and show the love of Christ to everyone who is served at the food pantry.

If you or someone you know is in need of food, please call Vicar Michelle at 815-535-6177.

If you are looking for a place to serve Christ and your neighbor, volunteering at the food pantry is a wonderful ministry! Contact Shirley Miller or Joyce Kent to ask how you can help. Volunteers are ALWAYS needed!



addictionandfaith.com

***Sunday Night 12 Steps - - A New Meeting for Mainline Christians on Zoom
This meeting is open to anyone in 12-Step recovery of any kind and for those
interested in learning more about 12-Step recovery.***

***The Center of Addiction and Faith and the Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran
Clergy (FRLC) host this meeting, offered every Sunday night at 7 p.m. cst***

All are welcome.

Follow the link:

***[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81470899913?pwd=UUd1T1IDTnd1ckFDSS84MXJ
QeXY5QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81470899913?pwd=UUd1T1IDTnd1ckFDSS84MXJQeXY5QT09)***

Stewardship of Financial Gifts

THANK YOU to those who have sent year end gifts as part of our stewardship drive to fund the ministries of our congregation for 2021! **THANK YOU** to those who are continuing with weekly offering. **THANK YOU** to those who have called and asked how they can continue to give. **THANK YOU** for your continued faithful giving to our ministry.

The church's ability to do ministry is dependent upon your regular gifts. 2020 has been a challenging year, yet St. Paul's was able to continue in the mission of the Church because of your faithfulness and financial commitment. While you may be joining us from worship at home, you may mail a check to our congregation. **Your gifts may be mailed to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, PO Box 445, Warren, IL 61087**

~Vicar Michelle & the Church Council

THANK YOU to our **PROPERTY VOLUNTEERS** who have done so much over the last few months to tend to the church building and parsonage upkeep, especially **ALL** of the snow removal and de-icing! You all, are a blessing!

Thank you for being dedicated to the upkeep and stewardship of our property that God has entrusted to this congregation, where all are welcome, to hear God's Word, and sent out to love and serve our neighbor.



If you are need of prayer, contact Rita Homb, Prayer Chain Coordinator 815-745-2232.

Ephesians 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*



Colossians 3:15

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

THANK YOU to our CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS for all of your time spent discussing and making important decisions regarding finances, property, stewardship, memorials, education, evangelism, ministry, and mission of the church. Your dedication to the life and vitality of St. Paul's does not go unnoticed. Thank you for using your spiritual gifts for the good of the church, and for those whom we serve in Christ. Thank you for creating an approachable council for our members when they have any questions or concerns. You, are a blessing!