

December 2014

Volume 72, Number 11

SAINT PAUL'S EPISTLE



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Cathy Evans

IMAGINING THE FUTURE: The power of faith

As I write this article, I am keenly aware of the challenges we all face in our lives. Some of us worry about our financial security ("How will we pay our mounting bills?"), our own health or that of our loved ones ("Will she beat her disease?"). We may worry about our children ("Why doesn't she share like she used to?"), or the state of our marriage ("What do we have in common, anymore?"). The reality is, life can be burdensome and overwhelming. It can be uncertain and scary. And, frankly, no one is exempt from anxiety.

As a congregation it is no secret that we, too, are struggling. For years we have not been able to turn our financial situation around, running a chronic deficit that has led to serious challenges that we must face. If we were to look around New England, we would find ourselves in plenty of company. But that is cold comfort when we look to a future that poses more questions than answers, specifically, "Will we still be here in five years from now?"

The Bible offers a constant and consistent response, if not a clear answer, to our questions and worries: For God, all things are possible. (Matt. 19:26) This promise is echoed in the words of St. Paul when he writes, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39) We hear it directly from the mouth of Jesus who admonishes us, "Remember, I am with you always!" (Matt. 28:20). The point is that God offers us a way out of our fears and worries: the pathway of faith. And if we choose to follow where Christ leads the way, we will never be alone nor without options or needed resources.

Fear, on the other hand, constricts our future and limits our options. Fear and anxiety, neurologists tell us, can short-circuit the part of our brains that allows us to think creatively and impair our ability to imagine a future shaped by hope. Faith—that is, trusting in God's promises *and* boldly obeying his command to follow wherever Jesus leads—that faith overcomes fear, overcomes obstacles, and opens up our future. Faith allows us to imagine the future God has in store for us, *and* empowers us in its direction.

Will we still be here in five years? Absolutely . . . if, and only if, however, we step out of the bondage of fear and into the freedom and light of faith, where we not only get to imagine a vibrant future, we get to live it, too.

Pastor Hugh

WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

Sundays at 8 and 10:30 AM; Thursdays at 7 PM

NOTES FROM FINANCE

New envelopes, Status reports

Important – Donations must be received by Sunday, December 28, 2014 to be on your 2014 year-end statement which is used for taxes.

Over the past several years, you have had the same envelope number, and as people come and go, the numbers on the envelopes are no longer in alphabetical sequence.

Next year, I will renumber the envelopes in order to return them to alphabetical sequence which will make some of the book work easier. When you pick up your envelopes in December for 2015, please do not use them until January.

The report on your contributions for January through October 2014 is available in the fellowship hall. Please check it to make sure everything is accurate before year's end. Remember, contributions made through December 28 (the last Sunday in 2014) will be credited to 2014 and all contributions received after that date will be recorded in 2015.

Just a note to make the counter's job a little easier –

- When using your envelopes, it is helpful (but not required) to put your name and the amount on the outside of the envelope.
- If you are making contributions for several different purposes (ex. Weekly offering, Flowers, Easter, Lent...), it is helpful to the counter if you would make separate checks.
- If possible put the checks in the envelope designated for that purpose or a separate envelope with your name, the purpose and your 2015 envelope number (if you know it).
- If all of this sounds too complicated to remember, please know that we will gratefully accept your gifts in any form and hopefully we will record them accurately.

If you do not currently have envelopes and would *like* to have them, please let me or Pastor know. If you have envelopes, you will get an Annual Statement at the end of the year for tax purposes. Likewise, if there are envelopes for individuals who will not be using them, please let me know so that they can be assigned to someone else.

A huge thank you to my many faithful counters who assist so diligently year after year. Without you, it would not be possible!! God bless you.

COUNTERS NEEDED FOR 2015

Can you help?

Are you looking for a way that you can help at St. Paul's? Would you consider counting the offering? We will give you all of the help necessary. You would count with another person for several Sundays until you feel that you want to try it alone, and then you can always call for help if things get complicated. It requires about two hours on the assigned Sunday and each person is scheduled approximately four or five Sundays a year (provided we have enough volunteers).

I am making up the schedule for 2015, so please contact me soon if you can help. Several people who have done it in the past have decided not to continue so I need new people. I really appreciate the service of all of the very faithful counters.

THANK YOU.

— Mary Procyk
860-257-4793

MISSION TRIP OPPORTUNITY

On January 11, 2015, Rochelle Ripley, founder of Hawkwing, will be here at St. Paul's Church to talk with us about how we, as a church family, can help the people of the Lakota Sioux Cheyenne River Reservation. She will join us for worship and after we will have a chili and cornbread luncheon where she will give a presentation about her people in South Dakota. You will be impressed by how her knowledge and love of these people has made, and continues to make, an enormous difference in their lives. She also will explain how we have an opportunity to join her and other devoted people on her annual trip out to South Dakota in June 2015.

Please set aside this date (January 11, 2015) to join us for lunch, and find out how you can help build up the lives of our brothers and sisters on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR FUEL

As we all know, the economy has been bad for some time. Agencies that help the poor have become increasingly busy. One of these agencies that impacts our town is the Wethersfield Fuel Bank, which is entirely funded by donations. Help is provided to people who have been living on, or have exhausted, their unemployment benefits. It also assists those whose current jobs pay far less than their prior careers. Some have had personal financial crises that have caused them to seek a helping hand. Our annual Christmas card tree has been a means of helping this beneficial town program. Instead of buying several cards to send to other members of St. Paul's, place one card on our Christmas card tree in Fellowship Hall and donate the money you'd have spent on several cards to the Fuel Bank. Many weather "experts" are predicting a cold, stormy winter in the Northeast (look what we've gotten so far) and heating fuel has to be a top priority for everyone.

— The Outreach Committee



ANGEL TREE

The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program provides new clothing and/or toys for children of needy families. Each Angel Tree is decorated with numbered paper angel tags with the first name, age, and gender of a child who is in need of a gift. Contributors remove one or more tags from the tree and purchase appropriate gifts for the child or children described on the tags. The suggested value of each gift is between \$15 and \$35.

Our Angel Tree was put up on Saturday, November 30 and we are asking that all gifts be returned (unwrapped and with tag attached), by Thursday, December 12.

Through this important program you have the opportunity to ensure that a less fortunate child receives a gift for Christmas. We have always had a great response in the past. We pray for an even better response this year!

For more information, talk to Bernice Noeker.

"THANK YOU" FROM THE WOLFS

To Our Church Family:

We very much appreciate the prayers and cards received during the summer months following Sallyann's surgery.

Also, Penrose had cataract surgery, in both eyes, during September and October.

We are pleased to report that we have healed well.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

We are sorry that we could not make a trip to Connecticut during the summer. We miss y'all! We have fond memories of the times we lived in Wethersfield and were active at St. Paul's.

With love, blessings and His peace,

Sallyann and Penrose Wolf



The totals are awesome!

Seafarers: 10 hats & scarves, 36 candy bars, 2 bags, books, and several magazines

Cheyenne River Reservation: 29 hats, 4 scarves, 2 handbags, 2 bags, and sewing fabric

THURSDAY MORNING GROUP

The Thursday Morning Group has been very busy in 2014. Along with projects for the Holiday Fair and the Seafarers International Christmas-at-Sea Program, we also made hats and scarves and small handbags for our Native American friends on the Lakota Sioux Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota.

etcetera...

Star of Love Christmas Pageant

Sun. Dec. 21 • 10:30 AM



On Sunday, December 21, at 10:30 a.m., the Sunday Church School will present *Star of Love*, a Christmas pageant which is for—and will involve—the whole congregation as we celebrate in story and song the birth of our Lord, Jesus.

Please plan to invite your family, friends, and neighbors to this special Christmas treat!

Preparations are already taking place to make this the best pageant ever! The children have been assigned parts and are practicing during Sunday School.

Parents: Dress rehearsal will be held on Saturday, December 20, from 9:30 a.m. - Noon (snacks will be provided).

Volunteers are always needed for both the dress rehearsal and on the day of the pageant.

Bakers: We also need cookies for coffee hour on December 20th. Sign up sheet in Fellowship Hall!

For more information please contact our coordinator, Cathy Evans.

— Please note: **There will be no 8:00 a.m. service on the 21st.** —



THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE!

Gift Cards are great presents for people of all ages!

Scrip is a program that allows you to purchase gift cards from hundreds of retailers for face value at church.

Then a percent from your purchase is donated to the church.

Stop by the Scrip Table after church on Sundays in Fellowship Hall for more information from Erica DeBlois and Carol Farley and to see if your favorite places to shop are on our list.



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES DURING ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

On Sunday, December 7, we will keep our children in worship as we celebrate the Advent season of preparation. Please **bring an ornament** from home (one that will be returned to you after the Christmas season, but one that is not irreplaceable in the event of a mishap). We will use these ornaments to decorate our Christmas tree as an act of preparing for the birth of Christ.

On Sunday, December 14, we will gather at 2:30 pm to go **Christmas Caroling** to our home-bound members. Jim and Tracy Newmark will coordinate this annual event.

On Sunday, December 21, our Sunday School children and our older youths will present *Star of Love*, a **Christmas pageant** for the whole congregation. *More info on this page.*

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

On Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24, St. Paul's will celebrate Jesus' birth with a setting based on the St. James Christmas Service, where the words of the traditional liturgy are set to familiar Christmas carols.

Our early service is scheduled for **6 pm**, and will be geared a bit more toward children and families, including a special Christmas message with Marvin. The choir will present festive Christmas anthems to further set the tone. During our late service, at **9 pm**, we will turn the lights down a bit lower to create a more reflective atmosphere. Both services will include Holy Communion.

On Sunday, Dec. 28, the First Sunday after Christmas, we will have one service at **9:30 am**.

CHURCH CHAPTERS

The next meeting of St. Paul's Book Club will be held on Tuesday, January 13th, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Carol Bruce. Our book for this month is ***My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor**. As described on Amazon.com, the book tells the story of "the first Hispanic and third woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor has become an instant American icon. Now, with a candor and intimacy never undertaken by a sitting Justice, she recounts her life from a Bronx housing project to the federal bench, a journey that offers an inspiring testament to her own extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself."

Books will be available at the Wethersfield Public Library under "St. Paul's Book Club" in mid-December.

Upcoming titles include:

February – ***The Husband's Secret***
by Liane Moriarty (at the home of Sue Agne)
March – ***Barbie and Ruth*** by Robin Gerber
(at the home of Carole Hughes)

We hope you will consider joining our book club in this New Year! All are welcome! If you have any questions, please call Sue Agne (860-563-0776).



ST. PAUL'S GIVING TREE

Our Giving Tree focus for the month of December is snow removal. As the winter season approaches, this is one expense that we need to anticipate. It really is difficult to judge how many dollars may be needed to cover the winter storms sure to arrive in the cold months of December, January, February and March. Please consider making a donation to help with the cost of this projected expense.

An unexpected expense recently came to be: our kitchen stove, used at so many of our functions, needs to be repaired so the oven will cook at the chosen temperature and not rise beyond that set degree. Any donation toward this expense is needed and welcome!

Giving Tree envelopes have been placed in the pews in church to make it easier to place in the offering plate during Sunday Worship.

As always, the Giving Tree remains in the Fellowship Hall with many leaves to choose that include other areas of our Ministry that will be a focus in the upcoming months. Any amount will be greatly appreciated! THANK YOU!!

If you have any questions, please call Sue Agne at 860-563-0776.

ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS

The poinsettia orders for the "Christmas Memorial Garden" can be dropped off at the church office on or before December 15th. It is important that you let us know ahead of time if you will be taking a plant. All remaining plants will be delivered to our shut-ins. The poinsettias will be ordered from Kim's Florist in Wethersfield. The cost will be \$15 per plant.

2014 Christmas Memorial Garden - Poinsettia Order Form

Given in memory of: _____
Please print name(s) exactly as you want it (them) to appear

Given by: _____
Please print name(s) exactly as you want it (them) to appear

Amount \$ _____ *Note: cost per plant is \$15*

Checks should be made to the order of: **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

Memo: "2014 Christmas Memorial Garden"



St. Paul's MEMBERS IN SERVICE for DECEMBER 2014

ACOLYTES:

Dec 7 - Arden Adamo
14 - Evan Bernard
21 - Meghan Creevy
24 - Celia Cheyney6:00 PM
24 - Bryce Gentino9:00 PM
28 - Cameron Cheyney9:30 AM

ALTAR GUILD:

Debbie Howe, Coordinator, 860-529-8583

Dec 7 - Bob Bowman & Bill Fischer Jr.
14 - Patty Bengtson
21 - **Pageant**
24 - Mary Procyk6:00 PM
24 - Deb Howe9:00 PM
28 - Jennie Dotts & Deb Howe9:30 AM

ASSISTING MINISTERS:

Dec 7 - Art Bruce8:00 AM
Mike Coyle.10:30 AM
14 - Patty Bengtson8:00 AM
Kathy Coyle10:30 AM
21 - Pageant10:30 AM
24 - William Fischer Jr.6:00 PM
Jerry Vaillancourt9:00 PM
28 - Patty Bengtson9:30 AM

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:

Sue Agne, Coordinator, 860-563-0776

Dec 7 - Joan Kratzer
14 - Mary Procyk
21 - Pageant
24 - Need6:00 PM
24 - Need9:00 PM
28 - Lillian Doerschler9:30 AM

TAPING:

Jan Pergande, Coordinator, 860-644-2888

Dec - Stephanie Lohmann

FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS:

Winnie Sawrun, Coordinator, 860-529-7588

Dec 7 - Heidi Boutin & Winnie Sawrun
14 - Amanda & Debbie Viola
21 - Pageant
28 - George & Deb Howe

FINANCE:

Mary Procyk, Coordinator, 860-257-4793

Dec 7 - Lois Woy
14 - Dick Agne
21 - Mike Coyle
24 - George Howe
28 - George Howe

READERS:

Lillian Doerschler, Coordinator, 860-529-1939

Dec 7 - Jeanette Serafine
14 - Joan Kratzer
21 - **Pageant**
24 - Vicki Anderson6:00 PM
24 - Jerry Vaillancourt9:00 PM
28 - Lillian Doerschler9:30 AM

USHERS:



Brian Beckwith, Coordinator; 8:00AM, 860-563-4066

Dec - Suzanne McDonald

Louise Lostocco, Coordinator, 10:30AM, 860-529-3079

Dec 7 - Bill Caughman & Bill Fischer Sr.
14 - Bill Caughman & Dave Bayek
21 - Bill Caughman & TBA
24 - TBA & TBA6:00 PM
24 - Bill Caughman & Russ Bengtson .9:00 PM
28 - Bill Caughman & Bob Bowman .9:30 AM

DECEMBER 2014 | EVENT CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2 Council Visioning Session 6:30 PM	3 AA 10 AM Grtr. Htfd. Conference Luncheon 12 PM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	4 Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM Thurs. Night Worship 7 PM	5 AA 10:00 AM	6 AA 7:30 PM
7 <i>Advent 2</i> Family Sunday Holy Comm. 8 AM Holy Comm. 10:30 AM Outreach Mtg. 12 PM	8 Cub Scouts 6 PM	9 Budget Mtg. 6:30 PM	10 AA 10 AM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	11 Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM Thurs. Night Worship 7 PM	12 AA 10:00 AM	13 AA 7:30 PM
14 <i>Advent 3</i> Holy Comm. 8 AM Holy Comm. 10:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Christmas Caroling 2:30 PM	15 <i>Jan. Epistle Deadline</i>	16 Parish Admin. 6:30 PM Ch. Council 7:30 PM	17 AA 10 AM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	18 Men's Breakfast 7:30 AM Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM Thurs. Night Worship 7 PM	19 AA 10:00 AM	20 Pageant Reh. 9:30 AM AA 7:30 PM
21 <i>Advent 4</i> Christmas Pageant 10:30 AM No 8 AM Service	22	23	24 Christmas Eve AA 10 AM Early Service 6 PM AA 7 PM Late Service 9 PM	25 Christmas Day Office closed No Bible Study or Thurs. Night Worship	26 AA 10:00 AM	27 AA 7:30 PM
28 <i>Christmas 1</i> Only 1 Service at 9:30 AM	29	30	31 New Year's Eve AA 10 AM AA 7 PM	1 January 2015 <i>New Year's Day</i> Office closed No Bible Study or Thurs. Night Worship		

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