

February, 2022

**MARK: MY WORDS**

It is said that the older one becomes, the faster time seems to pass. That may also apply to the rhythm of the church year. At this writing, we have just entered into the season of Epiphany with the celebration of The Epiphany of Our Lord and the Baptism of Our Lord. While this year this season lasts for eight weeks (including the last Sunday, the Transfiguration of Our Lord), already plans are being made for Lent.

As Wednesday does not come until March 2—and this is the *February* newsletter—but already the Worship Team and I will be discussing how we will attempt to observe that time of the church year. “Attempt” is the operative word, because, once again, due to the rapidly increasing number of people testing positive for COVID, we might have to consider suspending in-person worship once again and returning to remote streaming/broadcasting of our liturgies.

As baseball great and the master of malapropisms, Yogi Berra, once said, “It’s like *déjà vu* all over again.” We have been trying so hard to remain worshiping together; and those who have been attending have been remarkably patient, understanding, and cooperative about wearing masks, social distancing, sanitizing, and following all the recommended protocols for staying safe.

Yet, unlike the first wave of the virus that overwhelmed us in 2019-2020, this surge of infections is affecting many more in the congregation. Even though many with whom I speak or visit are fully vaccinated and “boosted,” they, their children, and their grandchildren, other family members and friends are still contracting the highly contagious Omicron variant of the virus. Thankfully, the symptoms they are experiencing are much milder than during the first wave. Most report feeling as though they have a bad cold, with little of the severe breathing problems, fatigue, or loss of smell and taste that accompanied the initial outbreak; but with so many more being affected, it may be that the best approach is to return to remote worship.

By the time this reaches everyone, a decision might well have been made. The Church Council will meet in a week (as of this writing), and surely that will be a major topic of conver- sation. There are many good reasons to do all that we are able to remain in-person, but ultimately, we have always maintained that our top priority is to make sure everyone is and feels as safe as possible.

In the meantime, we will work our way through the season of Epiphany, straining for even a glimpse of the Light of Christ that penetrates even our deepest darkness and gathers us into His warm, merciful, and deathless embrace. Given the relentless shadows that the virus is casting over our community, our state, our nation, and the world, that Gift and blessing is what we most need.



**LENTEN PLANS**

Although, as mentioned above, Lent is a good distance away, normally it might be helpful to begin to lay out our plans for mid-week Lenten services, Holy Week liturgies, and the celebration of Easter. Repetition is always good to reinforce important information.

 But since we do not know the status of our worship plans during that time, and the situation with COVID is so fluid, we will hold off on providing that background until next month’s newsletter when, hopefully, we will have a better idea of what our worship situation will look like. Thanks for your patience and understanding.



**WORSHIP CLOSURE INFORMATION**

 If, because of COVID levels or inclement weather, the decision is made to stop or call off in-person worship here are the ways that information will be communicated to the congregation:

* If the decision is made early enough in the week to cancel worship an email will be sent to those on the church email list
* You may tune to WEFM 95.9 for an announcement during their broadcast
* The church and school Facebook page ([St Paul Lutheran Church & School - Michigan City, IN | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/stpaulmichigancity)) will post an announcement
* You may dial the church office number (219-874-7293) and when the automated menu begins press the # button for a recorded announcement

We will make every effort to insure that everyone is informed as quickly as possible should such an action be taken by the church council.



**COMMUNITY SOUP KITCHEN**

 As you know, when the first COVID outbreak, hit one of the casualties of our ministries was our participation in the community soup kitchen. For many years, we served a meal on Sundays after worship. At first, volunteers were mainly from the congregation; but as the years went on, more and more of the teams were comprised of members of the community.

 When things first began to shut down in response to the virus, we were still trying to find ways to continue serving. Erik Tannehill was determined to serve the hungry as long as was feasible; but eventually, we stopped doing so because many of the volunteers were afraid to be exposed to those who might have been infected.

 Emergency plans were developed to continue this ministry, and the people of First United Methodist agreed to handle the preparation and serving of the meals on their own. The thought was that this would be a stop-gap measure for no more than three to six months. *Two years later,* they are still shouldering most of the responsibility for the meals, although First Presbyterian and another congregation are each offering meals one to two days a week as well.

 Struggles with funding for the program and a growing sense of fatigue among volunteers led to a meeting in early January of the pastors of the congregations who had been/are involved in the ministry to discuss its future. In the past, the idea of establishing one central location for the kitchen as was done with the men and women’s shelter had been floated; but at this meeting, that was dismissed due to the fact that many who use the ministry live all over the city and would have difficulty making it to the location if it was not within a reasonable distance of their neighborhood.

 It has seemed a great shame to me that after all the terrific work done by our crew to remodel the St. Paul Room and kitchen and replace the flooring in them that now they mostly sit empty and unused. With that in mind—and the hope that we might resume what was such an important ministry here for so long—I offered at the meeting to raise with the Church Council the possibility of using our facilities for at least some of the days now covered by First Methodist.

 Truthfully, it is difficult to know if there would be enough volunteers who had worked here before that would be able or willing to return to help out now. At the time of its closing here, our congregation only sponsored one team on a regular basis with the Church Council helping out one or two Sundays a year.

 Even if we initially were not able to put together one or more teams, we could at least offer the use of our facilities. Erik is still coordinating the overall program and naturally is familiar with what we offer. We still have a great deal of food in our freezers and pantry that could be used. We are close enough to First Methodist that those who have become used to going there over the last two years wouldn’t have trouble coming another several blocks to our kitchen.

 It was stated at the meeting that there is a very dedicated core of volunteers at First Methodist on Sundays that might not want to leave there and come here if food was served here after worship as before. It may be that there would be other days during the week that the kitchen would operate from us and perhaps that would allow more volunteers from our congregation to participate more easily than Sundays were in the past.

 Right now, the congregations that are operating the kitchen are serving with the “grab and go” model where pre-packaged meals are prepared and handed out to guests rather than them coming in and sitting down in the fellowship hall to eat. Given the severity of the COVID situation right now, that would be the model we would follow as well. If the danger lessens down the road, we might be able to find a way to return to seating in the St. Paul Room.

 To resume our participation in the ministry would be a major decision on our part. It would certainly require the approval of the Church Council and perhaps a congregational vote as well. That would offer the opportunity for the congregation to address any questions or concerns and to pledge their support for undertaking this vital ministry once again.

 Further information about our discussion will be communicated as it develops.

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Red Cross blood drives have been scheduled for **Thursday, April 28,** and **Tuesday, July 26*,*** in the St. Paul Room. There is a critical shortage of blood right now, and one pint of blood can help up to three people. Please consider donating if you are able to do so. More information will be available as these dates draw near.

In December, 2020, we received a generous bequest from Dick and Mavis Collins which enabled us to upgrade our computers, telephone system, and security cameras, as well as repair the tower clock and totally upgrade the St. Paul Room and kitchen. We are very grateful for this gift and have hung this plaque in the St. Paul room to commemorate the Collins’ generosity. We will use the remainder of the Collins fund for the first stage in refurbishing our pipe organ.



**THE COMMEMORATION OF MARTIN LUTHER**

This article was included in last year’s February newsletter, but it seemed important enough to include again this year. Many Lutherans are unaware of details of Luther’s life; and since we as a church body take our name from him, it is always good to re-acquaint ourselves with that knowledge.

Throughout the church year, we remember and give thanks for the lives, witness, and examples of many of the heroines and heroes of the faith. February brings us an especially important one for us who share a Lutheran heritage and history.

 On February 18, 1546, Martin Luther died at the age of 62 in his hometown of Eisleben, Germany. He had long suffered from poor health due to a variety of illnesses and conditions: [Ménière's disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9ni%C3%A8re%27s_disease), [vertigo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vertigo), fainting, [tinnitus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tinnitus), a [cataract](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cataract) in one eye, [kidney and bladder stones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kidney_stone_disease), [arthritis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthritis), an ear infection that ruptured an ear drum, and [angina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angina).

 As one would expect, as his condition worsened, so did his mood, his writings, and sermons. It was during this time that he wrote some of his most hateful and incendiary comments about the Jewish people of Germany and Europe. Those are some of the most shameful aspects of his legacy; and over the last several decades, Lutherans worldwide have recognized the harm they brought and repented of his vitriol to those against whom his writings were used as justification for oppression and violence.

 Like all of us, Luther was a complex person. He is regularly included in the group of those who had some of the greatest influence on historical developments of his time, but also one whose failings, shortcomings, and sins are as great as his accomplishments. In his own words, he, with the rest of us, are “saints and sinners” at the same time, and always in need of the gracious and merciful compassion and forgiveness God grants in Christ that he so powerfully articulated and championed throughout his life and ministry.

 His famous last words are, “We are all beggars. It is true.” Perhaps that better sums up his theology and teaching better than the dozens of volumes of his sermons and teachings that we possess. That belief fits particularly well in the Lenten season in which this commemoration falls. May God grant us, with Luther, the humility, the will, the faith, and the hope to “beg” God for His mercy and receive it always with joy, trust, and thanksgiving.

 

 **February Birthdays February Anniversaries**

 1 Jary Tannehill 17 Norman & Diane Egilske

 2 Heather Hazel 20 Tim & Laura Mellon

 4 Barbara Tanner 21 Charles & Sherry Payne

 5 Richard Cains

 7 Susan Koziel

 Martha Schroeder

 9 Janet McMahon

 10 Emma Haring

 Janet Priebe-Protas

 12 Susan Green

 13 Jacob England

 14 Wayne Dolson

 15 Dena Slisher

 16 Barbara Bass

 17 Dale Prybylla

 19 Kimberly Summers

 22 Amelia Moore

 Kelly Neulieb

 Aaron Petri

 23 Katherine Summa

 24 Molly Robbins

 25 David Murray

 26 Kayla Bergquist

 Chloe Fisher

 Karen Schacht

 27 Chip Claussen

 Suzann Dolson

 28 Bernhard Neitzel

![C:\Users\volunteer\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\JUAK50WD\thank-you[1].jpg]()

**IN MEMORY OF RUTH LUBS**

**General Fund** by Betty Yourist, Gail Leffew, Virgil & Pat Miller, Jim & Sandy Galinowski,

Carol Radke, Beverly Johnson, Betty Staples, Diane Gielow, Mike & Marge Bockover,

Fred & Julie Schweizer, Paul & Miriam Sikora, Nancy Schoub, Emil & Carolyn Blobaum,

Muriel Jacobi; Ronald, Tammi, & Tania Durre

**IN MEMORY OF SONNY ROBBINS**

**General Fund** by Michael & Amy Maesch

**IN MEMORY OF RONALD JOHNSON**

**General Fund** by the Johnson women

**IN MEMORY OF DENNIS MAHAFFEY**

**General Fund** by Mike & Marge Bockover

**IN MEMORY OF SUE BIGGS**

**General Fund** by Rev. Lawrence & Karen Shoberg

**IN MEMORY OF PRISCILLA LADWIG**

**General Fund** by Diane Gielow

**IN MEMORY OF JOYCE MANNING**

**General Fund** by Mike & Marge Bockover

**IN HONOR AND IN THANKS TO ALL WHO DECORATED THE CHURCH SO BEAUTIFULLY FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**

**Capital Improvement Fund** by Maxine Powell

**IN MEMORY OF BRIAN SCHRAIDT**

**General Fund** by his father, James Schraidt

**IN MEMORY OF SUZANNE CAINS**

**General Fund** by Mike & Marge Bockover



**Long-Term Prayer List**

Robert Atwood Irene Bohnstadt Sherry Brotsky

Laura Eilers-Straight Diane Gielow Jim Gleason

Dolores Hackett Terry Hygema Jess Kalvaitis

Christine Kiser Ryan Krueger Tom & Larry Leuth

Pastor Al Lorentzen Laura Moore Ken Mulder

Duane Ormsby George Ottersen Kay Peglow

Cameron Rackard Knox Shepherd Ryan Sirk

Wally & Betty Tarliff Erik Tannehill Jean Thomas

Lee Timm Linda Utley Venia Wendt

Chris Weninger Nancy Wisser



 Monday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

 Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

 Wednesday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

 Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon

 Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

**St. Paul Lutheran Church & School Staff**

 Pastor Mark Reshan

 Organist John Remmel

 Accompanists Jary Tannehill, Mark Tannehill, Jacob Tannehill

 Choir Director Lori Zylstra

 Office Secretary Libby Pollock

 Custodian Mark Kloess

 School Principal Tracey McCay

 School Office Coordinator Lisa Heddens

 School Custodian Kevin Winkler



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