

St. Paul
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Missouri
Synod

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Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

From the Desk of Vicar Larry

The tomb is empty; Alleluias are back...but does Easter end here? Of course not! We will continue to celebrate Easter for the next several weeks, and then we'll start the season of Pentecost. But does Easter end there? Of course not! We celebrate Easter every Sunday. While it's great to focus on Easter the way we do, we can't lose sight that every week we remember that Christ is risen. We sing praises to the risen King! We receive the forgiveness He won for us at the cross when we confess and are given absolution! We celebrate the Lord's Supper – where the risen Christ meets us with His Body and Blood! We look forward to His return together! Don't let Easter be a one day a year celebration. Let every day, every week be a chance to say: **HE IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED!** See you in church!

Head Elder – Dennis Pieper

The traditions of April Fools' Day started back when some French clans refused to adopt the Gregorian calendar and insisted on celebrating the New Year on April 1st. The French king labeled them April-Fools for not changing with the times. Now it's a day we play tricks, making something appear real when it isn't. Having celebrated Easter on March 31st the world around us may call us Fools for putting our faith in a 2,000-year-old story of a person coming back from the dead. God our Father is in the business of doing the impossible. Creating the world by speaking it into being. Parting the Red Sea. Taking out Goliath with a rock. Raising Jesus from the dead! The biggest impossible, foolish thing of all – loving, forgiving and adopting us back into His family by paying the debt we owed. I'll be a fool for Him.

Treasurer – Paul Szymanski

As I'm sure many of you are finding with the tax law changes enacted a number of years ago, our charitable giving has much less of an impact on our tax return than it used to. Obviously, it's different for everyone, but it challenges the question of why do we give? Is it because of a benefit that we receive? Is it because God commanded us to do it? Is it because we love our church and the ministry it provides and we want that to continue? Or is it a combination of a lot of things? Whatever the reason, God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). Give cheerfully and out of the abundance that God has provided us. Thank you always for all of your gifts and tithes to St. Paul.

Youth – Paul Szymanski

He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia! Looking forward to some upcoming events in April. On April 12th we will have a Game Night at church for all ages. On April 14th we will have a Youth Event at an Escape Room in Orland Park, and on April 19th we will have a Movie Night at church. God's blessings to our Eighth Graders who will be confirming their faith at the end of April. Alexa, Alyssa, Dash, Hailey, Riley, Tyler, and Willa, may the Lord bless you and keep you in your faith as you continue to grow and mature in you walk with Christ.

Altar Guild – Vivian Purnell

We serve in the House of the Lord throughout the Year: Sundays & Special Holidays. What is our role? Refill the Altar/Communion/Special Candles with oil, clean the Communion Ware after each Service. We welcome an individual who would be responsible for the care of the Fine Altar Linens. Each member would be assigned a partner when scheduled for most services. Having additional members decreases the frequency needed to serve and affords an opportunity for substitutes in case of illness, vacation, etc. Each prospective member will be instructed regarding responsibilities. We would be delighted to have YOU join us. Any questions, contact Vivian Purnell at 708-748-8808.

Alaska Mission Fund Raiser

You can donate while you dine on **Tuesday, April 2nd** at Culver's of Matteson at 20716 S. Cicero Avenue in Matteson from 4:00-8:00pm. Just show the flier or mention St. Paul Alaska Mission Trip when you checkout and 10% of your order will go to the Alaska Mission Trip

Men's Bible Study

Join us for an 8-session discussion of C.S. Lewis's most widely read and beloved Christian books of all time – Mere Christianity. After almost 80 years since it was written, we will discover Lewis's timeless message and explore the positive ideas that Lewis wrote about and better understand the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Join us Saturdays at 7:00 A.M at the church or online (via Zoom) for a faith-strengthening discussion with like-hearted men. Contact Scott Schulz for more information.

Grandparents

With the springtime weather upon us, here are a couple outdoor activities for you to plan with your grandchildren in April: 1) Plant a garden with your grands – as you water, remind them that Jesus is the living water. 2) Take a walk with your grands and point out the wonders of God's creation. See your 2024 Grandparenting Planner for more activities and ideas to help you have a greater spiritual impact on your Grandchildren.

2024 Alaska Mission Trip

July 27th (10-day Team) or July 29th (7-day Team) to August 4th. It's not too late to sign up. If you are curious about being a part of the team this year, please attend the next information meeting on **Monday, April 15th at 6:00pm** at the church or on Zoom. Please contact Pastor Troester or Scott Schulz if you have any questions.

Focus Mission for April, May & June

The 2024 Alaska Mission Trip is our Focus Mission for April, May, and June. Watch the Sunday Bulletin, the Monthly Newsletter, and the Narthex Monitor for more information and ways you can support the mission and the missionaries.

Fellowship and Fire

For thousands of years, men have gathered around a fire for many reasons including celebrations and supporting each other. You are invited to join other men **Thursday, April 18th at 7:00 P.M.** as we come together to relax, celebrate our victories, and support each other around a fire. You only need to bring your favorite outdoor chair and your favorite campfire consumables (beverage, snacks, etc.). We will gather behind the Education Building – just look for the fire.

Voice of Care – Dennis Pieper

On **May 18th** St. Paul will host a Workshop for Spiritual Respite Companion Care from 12:00pm - 4:30pm with a lunch provided. Spiritual Respite Companion Care is distinctively Christian Care by trained volunteers who visit someone struggling with a disability – often restricting their participation in church events. Usually this is only 1 or 2 hours a month. It is not medical support, home health, or other things that Personal Health Assistants might do. It is sharing the love and hope of Jesus with a friend or soon to be a friend. A Spiritual Respite Companion is anyone who can do any one of these 5 things:

- Look a friend in the eye and say “I care about you.”
- Share a cup of coffee, play cards or even color pictures.
- Give of your time and presence to support the family who may be dealing with loss or grief due to a disability.
- Go through photo albums, listen to favorite music, laugh at a joke the 3rd time it’s being told.
- Can say “I’ll pray for you.” and mean it.

A Note from Lori Wilbert – Prison Ministry

I am grateful for the prison ministry and work I have continued to do with my classes at Stateville prison and through the program of Returning Citizens, led by Andre & Rochelle. I have been able to line up speaking engagements for Andre with churches throughout the NID where I have spoken in the past 30 years. Andre has attended 4 Lutheran congregations in the past 4 months to speak to kids and adults regarding the importance of the church helping ex-offenders. St. Paul’s congregation is our home base and Andre, Rochelle and I are grateful. Also, many heartfelt thanks for all of the cards for my Dad that continue to arrive. Mom and I thank you for your many kindness. The prayer shawls continue to comfort and provide not only solace but warmth as well ☺ I look forward to speaking to you in person when my schedule allows, hopefully this summer. Blessed journey to the cross and our Lord’s resurrection+

Vicar Larry’s Ordination Day

On **Sunday, July 7th at 3:30pm** we are blessed to celebrate the Ordination of Vicar Larry Ruger as he becomes an Ordained Pastor of the LCMS. President Allen Buss of the Northern Illinois District will participate as well as other Pastors from the area. This special service includes the laying on of hands by the fellow pastors as the candidate now takes on the Vocation of Pastor. Akin to the calling and anointing of the prophets of old, this traditional rite only happens once in the ministry of the pastor and as such is marked as a very special occasion. Make plans to participate as an encouragement to Vicar Larry and celebrate our Lord’s blessings. There will be a simple reception to follow.

Support Our Troops – Mallory Kelly

We are back! Fill the Bin! Please shop for snack items such as individually wrapped cookies, crackers, granola bars, beef jerky, tuna punches, trail mix, hard (**no chocolate or gummy**) candy. We also send hygiene items (**no liquids or aerosols**) such as tube lotion, stick deodorant, lip balm, foot powder, toothpaste or brushes. Included in each shipment are words of encouragement, so continue to write undated cards or pick up a coloring sheet. You can support this ministry by making a monetary donation through the “other” line on the offering envelope, just write the word “Troops”. Be sure to check the military board for “thank you” letters from the Chaplains who receive the Care Packages.

Ladies Aid – Mallory Kelly

Our next meeting will be **Tuesday, April 9th at noon** in the narthex. Please **bring an appetizer to share**.

Prayer Shawl - Diane Wille and Peggy Smutny

We were able to provide pocket prayer squares for the Community Resource Fair. In March Vicar Larry blessed 30 plus prayer covers that were delivered to Palos, Franciscan Health, Pass and Vitas. These ministries have expressed thankfulness for these caring pieces. Please talk to someone in the Prayer Shawl ministry if you know someone who would benefit. If you take a shawl, please remember to fill out a card to enable us to better track the inventory. We meet every Monday at 12:30 except holidays. Onward....

Easter Greetings from the Mission Quilt Group!

We continue to assemble quilts to be used by those in need, and they are boxed up and sent to Lutheran World Relief for distribution. If you have any suggestions for places for the blankets to be donated, please let us know and we would consider those places also. You are invited to join us on any Thursday morning in the Education Bldg on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month from 9:00am to 11:00pm. We thank all of those who help with this mission whether you come on Thursdays or do the work at home. Karen Gustafson (708) 478-1841

Summer Ladies Bible Study – Karen Gustafson

Our Summer Ladies' Bible Study group will start on **Thursday June 6 at 6:30 pm**. Here's a clue as to what we will be studying: "What is the Hymnal part of the Bible?" The next time I will have more information for you about the study. Watch the bulletin and newsletter for the updates. Easter Blessings!

St Paul Food Pantry – Rich & Ruth Treichel

The St. Paul Food Pantry and its many volunteers served 222 families last Saturday. The pantry receives the majority of its food from the Greater Chicago Food Depository. We changed the pantry's hours to begin at 8:30 a.m. since so many people arrive early to get in line. All volunteers join together in prayer and everyone works together in the distribution of the food. If you want to witness Christian love being spread throughout the neighborhood, come and visit the food pantry, or better yet volunteer to help!

In Closing.....

Jesus said, *"So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near."* (Luke 21:31). When we see the spring time we know that new life is on the way, and that is a sign of the new life we have because Jesus is risen from the dead. But, we get bogged down by death, and storms, and wars and evil around us. Look around, Jesus brings us new life. Jesus is King, Jesus reigns forever! Live in that certainty and live to be lights of the Good News of Jesus. We have Jesus, we have Peace.

He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!

Pastor