

July 25, 2024

Dear Brother & Sisters in Christ,

Each Sunday we worship the Triune God, hearing His Word and receiving His gifts in Baptism and Communion. There is a Presidential election coming up, and we just had the ordination and installation of Pastor Larry. Some things are not happening at church because it's summer, but our Alaska Mission Team is on their way up to Anchorage and Copper Center. We are discussing Sunday School, Confirmation, Youth Bible Study and Paul Szymanski is on his way home from the Leaders gathering for next year's Youth Gathering in New Orleans. There are Bible Studies that continue through the summer months, as does Prayer Shawl, Support the Troops, and the Food Pantry continues to work each week. We are the church, we are called together as God's church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us because a mighty fortress is our God. We are saved by grace through faith as a gift of God, and we are God's workmanship to do good works to His Glory. Read on... this is what the church does.

#### **From the Desk of Pastor Larry....**

Greetings in the name of Christ, whose grace is sufficient for you! I am grateful for your support as we celebrated my ordination a few weeks ago. I still have some work to do class wise. I have 6 more classes to take- three online, three on site in St. Louis for one-week intensives. The last of these will be January 2026. Afterwards, I look to take the next program, which will bring me to a Masters in Divinity, or an equivalent certification.

One of the benefits of this program is that I have been able to serve at St. Paul's for 2 and half years prior to my ordination, and knowing my call is here, we can continue serving together in ministry as I continue to learn and grow. I am grateful for a congregation that continues to seek out ways to do the good works which God prepared beforehand for us to do together.

In February, I attended the Best Practices Conference in Arizona. From that, I learned about some different ideas for outreach and ministry. We'll be sharing those ideas over the next month or so. In the meantime, I would encourage you to think of different ways that you feel called to live your faith as saved by grace, redeemed believers in Christ, in service to others. That may be by participating in existing outreach, like food pantry or prayer shawls. Maybe you would like to re-start a ministry that we have done in the past, like re-starting our puppet ministry with the youth of our congregation. God may be calling you to start something new. As I mentioned, we'll share some ideas shortly that may interest you, but don't be afraid to think of things that you'd like to see come to fruition. Contact Pastor Troester or me if you have some ideas- we'd love to hear about them! God's peace to you as we celebrate His creation in the full bloom of summer.

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### **Elders – Dennis Pieper**

Matthew 19:14 "Jesus: Let the little children come to Me; do not get in their way. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to children like these." (the Voice paraphrase). I got to thinking about this verse this week as my family and I spent four days at the Special Friends Camp in Michigan and remembering that our Alaska Mission Trip. As a church we had VBS and hope to host another at St. Matthews. Looks like we are doing a fine job of welcoming the "little children". The question is "Are we really?" You see when Jesus said these words, He wasn't in the temple talking to church leaders. He was talking to His disciples and the adults around Him, individuals. So, I must look at myself and ask you to do the same. How am I doing at making it easy for "the children" to come to Jesus? Am I inviting families of young children to be a part of St. Paul? I think I am but perhaps my prayer is to be: "Open my eyes Lord to see the little ones - no matter their ages or abilities - that they may come to you."

### **2024 6-Month Contribution Statement**

2024 6-Month Contribution Statements went out in the mail a few weeks ago. **Please make sure that you look your statement over.** Should you have any questions, please contact Nancy Shugan at 708-516-6708.

### **St Paul Food Pantry – Rich & Ruth Treichel**

The St. Paul Food Pantry has had a number of its volunteers either on vacation or ill. This means the remaining volunteers have to fill in for the ill or vacationing volunteers by doubling their work. If you would like to volunteer but don't think you can work every weekend, please let us know that you would be able to help when individuals are absent. Information sheets were handed out by our volunteers informing the food pantry patrons that each family with children is eligible to receive a credit amount for the summer to help purchase food. The summer EBT (electronic benefit transfer) provides qualifying families with school-aged children a card to purchase groceries during the months when school is out. This summer, families will receive a one-time benefit of \$120 for each eligible child. This grant is supplied by the State of Illinois.

### **Beginner Handbells – Pam Reinke**

**Ever wonder what it takes to play handbells? Are you afraid you might not have the skills? Do you worry you would be too anxious or nervous to play them?** Or, perhaps you already know how but would prefer a more relaxed and simple experience? Well, guess what? Coming this fall, St. Paul's is going to be offering a new handbell group that will address all these concerns and fears! **The music will be simple and easy to follow, but best of all, you don't need to know how to read music!** **What more you can you ask for?** If you are interested or have any more questions, please give me a call, I would be more than happy to help. Rehearsals held once a week in the evening, for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, with our first projected participation in a church service on Thanksgiving. In order to plan music, I would need to know an approximate number of participants. Please give me a call and leave a message! Pam Reinke, 708-334-2550

### **Prayer Shawl – Take & Make**

If you know how to knit or crochet, we could use your God-given talent in the Prayer Shawl Ministry! There is yarn available at the church in drawers by the stairwell. We are in need of baby blankets and hats, prayer shawls, scarves, and prayer squares. **We meet every Monday in the narthex at 12:30pm.** Working at home is also a great way to increase our supply of items to share. Donations made to the Prayer Shawl Ministry help us purchase yarn to continue our projects. We truly are BLESSED to be a BLESSING.

### **Support our Troops - Sponsored by Ladies Aid**

Shop, shop, shop! Currently, we are sending care packages to three chaplains each month since there are 7 deployed chaplains at this time. We recently received a handwritten thank you message from Chaplain Neider... "We've been in Okinawa about a month and the Marines and Sailors are starting to miss the familiar. Your snacks and prayers squares have been just the thing to brighten their day." Please continue to brighten a soldier's day by shopping for individually wrapped snacks and basic hygiene items. You can also write an undated message of support. You can find blank cards and coloring sheets on the military table. Thank you for your continued support of this mission.

### **St Paul Scholarship Fund – Dottie Hagestad**

St. Paul's has a scholarship fund that provides tuition assistance to parents of Lutheran school students--both elementary and high school--and also to those who are attending Synodical schools to become full-time church workers. **In order to apply for this assistance, parents must fill out a form (available at the church office) and submit it before August 15.** The goal of the fund is to make up the difference between the cost of tuition for St. Paul's students versus the rates offered to families who are members of the sponsoring church. Any tuition assistance awarded is sent directly to the Lutheran school. Congregation members can support the work of this Fund by prayers and also through offerings earmarked for "Scholarship Fund."

### **Grandparents**

The best thing you can do for your adult children, their spouses, and your grandchildren is encourage them. Good coaches use their experiences and their words to affirm and encourage. They often run along the field or the court reinforcing the game plan, inspiring, cheering on their players in the hope it will lead to victory. Be that coach! Set a standard of Godliness by modeling your faith to your family – they are your legacy. See your 2024 Grandparenting Planner for ideas to connect with your grandchildren in August.

### **Men's Saturday Morning Bible Study**

Do you feel guilt and shame about negative thoughts and emotions and your inability to overcome them? You might be asking, *Should a Christian even be having these struggles?* Join other men for a 5-week study on the life of the prophet Elijah to explore the causes of depression, the factors that contribute to it, and how we can get through it. Elijah's story reveals that everyone is susceptible to depression – but we don't have to stay in that dark place. We serve a God who meets us and brings us into the light. So, join like-hearted men Saturday mornings at 7:00am online or here at St. Paul starting August 10<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Scott Schulz for more information.

### **Men's 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, August 15th at 7:00pm** as we come together to relax, celebrate our victories, tell stories, 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. P.S. Bring a friend.

### **Advent By Candlelight**

It's never too early to mark your calendar for an important event! St. Paul will hold an **Advent By Candlelight for the ladies** of the congregation, their family members, friends and neighbors, on the First Sunday of Advent, **December 1<sup>st</sup> at 4:00pm** in the St. Paul Fellowship Hall. There is no charge for this event. This is a wonderful afternoon of the Word, music and fellowship to help you prepare your hearts for the Advent season before the Christmas festivities get into full swing!

### **In Closing...**

This newsletter will help to keep you informed and to encourage you in ways that you might get involved in our work together. Christ is coming back and we have His work in front of us. May those who come behind us find us faithful, and may our lives be a witness of our Savior and what He came to do to save the world.

*Peace,*

*Pastor T.*