

St. Paul Lutheran Church

June 2010 NEWSLETTER

76 High Street
Middletown CT 06457

(860) 346-9107

Sunday Contemporary Service: 9:00 AM

Sunday Traditional Service: 10:30 AM



It's hard to believe another program year here at St. Paul has concluded. Many thanks to everyone who led and participated in our worship services, Sunday School, Confirmation and Adult Education classes, as well as the myriad of other witness, service and support ministries in which this congregation participates.

As we look ahead to the summer months of June, July, and August, as the Pentecost Season of growth and renewal unfolds, there will be opportunities for worship and learning, witness, service and support, but at a more relaxed pace. Check out the rest of the newsletter for details about all the wonderful opportunities which are coming up. See which fits best for you so that this will be a summer where you are renewed and refreshed in your relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior.

In His Service,

R. Maureen Hawksley, Pastor

St. Paul's Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

The semi-annual meeting of the St. Paul Lutheran Church will be held on Sunday, June 6, 2010 at 11:40 a.m. in the Parish Hall. The agenda for this meeting includes the reception of reports from committees, task forces, and organizations, election of Council members and members of other committees, a report from the NCD Health Care Team and recommendations regarding the summer and fall worship schedule.

11:30 a.m. Gathering

11:40 a.m. Meeting

St. Paul's has been deficit spending against church revenues for many years. At our current spending rate, our available "Thrivent Church Funds" will be depleted by late summer, 2011. To preserve as many options as possible in our limited time frame, an action plan needs to be adopted by the congregation now. We are working with the ELCA New England Synod for their input and guidance. Church council has activated a task force to develop alternatives and recommendations for discussion at council meeting on May 17th. The council will sponsor recommendations on our path forward for congregational consideration at the semi-annual meeting on June 6th. PLEASE attend this meeting. If you have questions or would like to give input to the Task Force, please contact: Pastor Hawksley, Tom Kugeman, Louise Mansueto, Peggy Morrissey, Deanna Ray, or Larry Stauffer.

St. Paul Special Congregational Meeting

A special meeting of St. Paul Lutheran Church will be held Sunday, June 6 in the parish hall following the semi-annual meeting to receive the financial update, recommendations from the Financial Task Force, and to vote on the recommendations. All members are urged to attend.

NEW ENGLAND SYNOD ASSEMBLY

June 3-5, 2010

The New England Synod Assembly will meet at the Sturbridge Host and Conference Center on June 3-5, 2010. Our voting members this year are Jerry Behm, Elizabeth St. Paul, and Pastor Hawksley. We pray God's blessings on the assembly as we seek to be "God's Work, Our Hands."

RELAY FOR LIFE

June 12 and 13, 2010

St. Paul once again is participating in this important outreach event which raises money for cancer research. Our team is called "Lutherans Alive." The walk takes place at Woodrow Wilson Middle School from Saturday June 12 at noon through Sunday, June 13 at noon. We are looking for walkers and donations. See Peggy Morrissey if you'd like to participate.

THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

Sunday, June 13, 2010

On Sunday, June 13, 2010, four young people will affirm their Baptism through the Rite of Confirmation at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. We pray God's blessings on our young people, their families, and their confirmation sponsors.

Our confirmands are:

Dominick Hernandez II
Alicia Michele Nordgren
Gregory William Winter
Christopher Thomas Ziemba

BIKE AND BUILD

June 15 and 16, 2010

We are once again hosting a Bike and Build group here at St. Paul. These young people bike across America and make periodic stops to assist in Habitat for Humanity building projects. They will arrive on Tuesday, June 15 mid-to-late afternoon and leave Wednesday, June 16 around 8:30 a.m. They will be sleeping in our parish hall and we will be providing them with snacks and water for the trip, along with a chicken barbeque dinner and breakfast. We are in need of the monetary donations, cooks, and services for this outreach event. Please see Louise Mansueto if you can help.

HOMES SAVED BY FAITH

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

We are hosting a "Homes Saved by Faith" event here in our Parish Hall on Tuesday, June 22 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The registration form is located at the end of this newsletter. Please see Pastor Hawksley for more details.

ONGOING PROJECTS/UPCOMING EVENTS AT ST. PAUL

Project	Benefits	Contact Person
Ongoing Soup/Food Drive Cash donations are also welcome	Amazing Grace Food Pantry	Earl Woike
Soda Can Tab Collection	The Families at Ronald McDonald House/ New Haven CT	WELCA Ladies
Lawn Mowing Volunteers	Our Church Grounds	Louise Mansueto
2010 Mother's and Father's Day Diaper Appeal – May 9 – June 20, 2010 Please see information in the Narthex	People in our community	Margaret D'Aquila
Friends of Luther Ridge membership drive \$3.00/person or \$5.00/couple or family	Friends of Luther Ridge	Marian Schultz and Edie Tyler
Relay for Life – June 12 and 13, 2010 Support St. Paul "Lutherans Alive"	People with cancer	Peggy Morrissey

Project	Benefits	Contact Person
Bike and Build June 15 PM – 16 th AM We will provide them with snacks, water, chicken barbeque dinner and breakfast. Monetary donations and servers will be greatly appreciated.	The youth of Bike and Build and all the people they assist through Habitat for Humanity	Louise Mansueto
Homes Saved by Faith Event, June 22 6:00-8:00 p.m. in our Parish Hall. Pre-register with Pastor Hawksley	All those who attend.	Pastor Hawksley
Vacation Bible School Rainforest Adventure Sunday June 27 through Thursday, July 1 from 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. in Parish Hall	All those who attend	Laura Jean Delventhal
Annual Worship Service and Church Picnic with Christ Lutheran Church – Sunday June 27 – gather at 9:00; worship service at 10:00; picnic at 11:00	All those who attend	Pastor Hawksley
Barbeque Ribs and Chicken Summer Supper July 10 at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$9.00 adults; \$7.00 children and seniors; children 5 and under are free	All who attend and our budget	Louise Mansueto
Mini-golf and Ice cream social event Friday July 16	All who attend	NCD Healthcare Team
Serve St. Vincent DePaul Sunday Supper July 25 and September 19	People in our community	Margaret D'Aquila
Annual St. Paul Gold Tournament Saturday August 7 at Banner Lodge in Moodus at 8:00 a.m.	Our budget	Tom Kugeman and Rich Lee

As you can see, we have many opportunities for fellowship and service during these summer months. Prayerfully decide where God is leading you to participate.

**CONCORDIA COLLEGE CHOIR CONCERT
A HUGE SUCCESS!!!**

The Tour Choir and Handbell Choir of Concordia College – New York presented their first concert of their May Northeast Tour here at St. Paul on Tuesday, May 4 at 7:00 p.m. Our church was alive with the choir's beautiful music and was enjoyed by the 102 people who attended. A delicious chicken cordon bleu supper preceded the concert. A free-will offering of \$2,541.00 plus \$60.00 in CD sales for a total of \$2,601.00 was raised for the Tour Choir. This money was raised through a tag sale and Thrivent supplemental funds, the "ads section" of the program booklet, proceeds from the supper and the offering received at the concert. (Funds from Thrivent, donations from a WELCA fundraiser, the WELCA treasury, and WELCA members, as well as many of our members at St. Paul's in Wethersfield, and food donations offset the supper expenses) Many, many thanks to everyone who worked so hard on this event, to the task force members and host families, and to all who attended. It truly was a magnificent concert!!

**NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT (NCD)
Kathy Raczka, Chairperson**

The next meeting of this team will be held Monday, June 7 at 6:00 p.m. at Bill and Beth Stielau's home.

Mark your calendars for two wonderful events to increase our fellowship and reach out to others. In June, our event will be on June 12 and 13 from noon to noon: The Annual American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. Our team "Lutherans Alive" will be walking the track at Woodrow Wilson High School to raise money for cancer research. See Peggy Morrissey if you'd like to participate.

Our monthly event in July is scheduled for Friday, July 16 at 6:30 p.m. – Mini-golf and Ice Cream Social. We look forward to a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship!

Our team met with Pastor Steve Schmidt, our NCD Coach, at our last meeting (May 16). We reviewed our programs and ideas for the future. These will be further discussed and confirmed at the June meeting.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/YOUTH COMMITTEE
Jay Huntington, Chairperson and Sunday School Superintendent

We completed another successful year of Sunday School thanks to Peggy Morrissey, lead teacher, and everyone who helped her. Thanks to Alan Hawksley for teaching the Sunday School Confirmation class and Laura Jean Delventhal for leading the Youth Group. We hope everyone enjoys their summer and we look forward to Sunday School 2010-2011 which will begin again September 19, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

Confirmation 2010

Our confirmands are winding down their two-year program in preparation for affirming their Christian faith through the Rite of Confirmation on Sunday, June 13, 2010 at the 10:30 a.m. service. Continue to keep the confirmands, their families and sponsors in your prayers. Our confirmands and sponsors are:

Dominick Hernandez II and Tom Kugeman
Alicia Michele Nordgren and Louise Mansueto
Gregory William Winter and Jeffrey Hurlburt
Christian Thomas Ziemba and Richard Lee

Vacation Bible School 2010

St. Paul will be holding its second annual evening VBS program this year! The theme for this year's program is Rainforest Adventure, and throughout this exciting VBS, we will be exploring how we can share, give, grow, love, and praise. Vacation Bible School will run from Sunday, June 27 through Thursday, July 1. We will meet for fellowship and dinner each night at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall. Kid's program will then run from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., while parents can participate in an Adult Bible Study examining the same verses as the children. Registration costs only \$5 and forms will be available at church. Donations to the program are greatly appreciated. We look forward to seeing you there!

Camp Calumet

As summer 2010 appears in the horizon, we are pleased to announce that the following people will be attending Camp Calumet as campers: Katie Branciforte, Dominick Hernandez II, Lena Huntington, Stacey Lentz, Troy Lentz, and Chris Ziemba. Elizabeth St. Paul will be serving as a Senior Counselor. Camperships will be awarded to our six campers and that counselors will receive camperships for their expenses. It will be the best summer ever! Boom chicka-boom!!



Are you going into 8th grade through 12th grade this September? If you are lucky enough to fall into this category, you are eligible to participate in the not to be missed camping weekend at Hammonasset. The event will take place from Friday, September 10 to Sunday, September 12. This year's theme will be "Loved to Love." It is an outstanding gathering where we get to come together with other teens from many of the New England Synod churches. This event is exciting! There will be 800+ attendees (many will be staff and kids you already know if you have been to Calumet), a nationally-known speaker, Ralph Supper, a great live band named Jacob's Road, small group Bible

study, games, competitions, crafts and inspirational worship. Joal Lentz will have registration forms available at the church on 5/30 and will need your completed forms and \$45.00 payment by Sunday 6/27. For more info about the event or to check it out, go to <http://www.hammoconnect.com/>

Adult Bible Study/Evening Adult Forum

Our classes concluded for the season and after a summer hiatus, will resume in the fall. We will look at days, times and types of study and hope that many of you will prayerfully decide to join us in the fall. As we grow in God's word, we grow in our passionate spirituality.

EVANGELISM/SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE **Margaret D'Aquila, Chairperson**



The next meeting of this committee will be held Tuesday, June 8 at 6:30 p.m.

This is a busy time for us because in May we host the Senior Luncheon. Everyone who attends loves the great food, the entertainment and hospitality of our congregation. Thanks to all who donated money, baked cakes, and served to make this successful. A special thanks to our cooks Louise, Earl and John, what would we ever do without them?

The Prayer Chain – goes on daily and we invite anyone who would like to join to speak to Pastor.

Amazing Grace – don't forget your soup (or other food donations). Summer is tough and people don't donate as much. We signed up for 30 cans of soup a month, let's always make this or even donate more.

Samaritans – is barely functioning, without people we cannot visit others, so only cards are being sent out.

We will serve St. Vincent de Paul in the summer, July 25th and in the early fall September 19th. We will need your help to do this. We have decided to serve hot dogs, beans and chips in July so we can use donations of condiments, chips, paper goods (cups, napkins and plates) and of course I will be asking for cupcakes. In September, Louise has decided to make Shepherd's Pie with rolls and cupcakes. We will need many cans of corn (or frozen corn), 4 extra large boxes of instant potatoes, rolls, and 150 cupcakes. If anyone has powdered juice, they can donate it - that would be wonderful also. We always welcome monetary donations because Louise shops at Sam's (or anyplace else that has good prices) and she gets things when they are on sale. We always need servers, those to take and serve the food. I know summer is a busy time but if you think you would be able to help bring and serve, please let Pastor, Louise, or Margaret know. We do not budget for these outreaches and depend on your generosity.

We need people to host coffee hour up to June 20 when . . . Summer Coffee Hour starts and it is so easy! Help by hosting, just bring juice, cups, napkins and a goody (home made or store bought) and things will go on great! I will be asking people to host-----think about saying YES.

Thanks for all your help this past year, St. Paul is a helping part of the community because of all of you. We wish you all a great, relaxing summer.

Diaper Appeal – we have been asked to join the Diaper Appeal that runs between Mother's Day and Father's Day. We will be handing out some pamphlets in case anyone wants to donate money and there will be a box in the Narthex to collect any packages of diapers that we collect. This will run until Father's Day (May 9th – June 20th) so feel free to donate and help others out.

Evangelism and Council is working out a plan of order on how we should follow through when visitors attend our church. We are known as such a friendly, inviting church but how do we follow up on visitors. Should be have someone pay them a visit with a loaf of Earl's famous bread, send a note, have visitor cards right in the pews.....lots of questions. If you have any good ideas that we can discuss, please let Pastor, Margaret, or anyone from Council know. Thanks.

WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF AMERICA, ST. PAUL BRANCH
Edith Tyler, President

The next WELCA meeting will be held June 17 at 10:00 a.m. followed by a luncheon outing at 11:30 a.m.

Our WELCA membership drive has concluded. A total of \$135.00 was raised to assist us in our many inreach and outreach projects.

Many thanks to our WELCA ladies for all their donations for the Concordia Choir event.

We are currently conducting the "Friends of Luther Ridge" membership drive which runs from May through July. Dues are \$3.00 per person or \$5.00 per couple or family. Please us the labeled envelopes that are in the basket in the narthex and give your dues to Marian Schultz or Edie Tyler. Our ladies assembled nine health kits which they donated and will be mailed for Lutheran World Relief, earmarked for Haiti and Chile. During the summer, we'll make a quilt, which will be sold at the Fall Craft Fair. We'll meet during the summer on Thursdays from 9-12 noon to work on the quilt. Monetary donations for the project will be gratefully accepted.

We will be giving a \$50.00 gift card to "First and Last Tavern" – the cost coming from our treasury – as a prize for the Golf Tournament this summer.

LONG RANGE PLANNING, FUNDRAISING AND PUBLICITY COMMITTEES
Richard Lee, Chairperson

The next meeting of these committees will be held Wednesday, June 16 at 8:00 p.m. at Robin Stauffer's home.

Long Range Planning: Pastor continues monthly services at One MacDonough Place and Wadsworth Glen. We continue to provide transportation for Sunday worship services. More volunteers would really be wonderful! We're currently planning the annual Worship Service and Picnic – tentative date is June 27 at 10:00 and picnic at 11:00. Place to be determined.

Fundraising: The annual St. Paul's Golf Tournament, slated for August 7 at 8:00 a.m. at Banner Lodge in Moodus, is a little over two months away. We need everyone's help in order to secure enough golfers, T-sponsors, and prizes. Let Rich Lee or Tom Kugeman know if you'd like to participate in any way.

Publicity: Our events continue to get good press! If you want your event advertised, please see Robin Stauffer with the information.

Adopt-A-Road: On June 26 at 10:00 a.m., meet at Tommy's to help clean up our stretch of road. Please help if you can!

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Tom Kugeman, Chairperson and Treasurer

The next meeting of this committee will be held Sunday, June 13 after the 10:30 a.m. service and confirmation reception.

Our congregation continues to struggle to meet its 2010 \$114,802.00 budget. As of this writing, our net loss is \$5,324.00. We appreciate everyone's trying to keep current with their pledges/giving.

The annual Spring Appeal continues. Thanks in advance for your generous giving.

PARISH NEWS

Congratulations to:

- Zachariah Delventhal and Laura Jean Hawksley, who were married here at St. Paul on Saturday, May 1, 2010. Pastor Hawksley officiated at the double-ring ceremony. God's blessings to you both.
- Kecia Stauffer, who was graduated from George Washington University on May 14 with a B.A. in International Affairs with a Sociocultural Anthropology minor. She is continuing to take classes at the university,
- Laura Jean Delventhal, who was graduated from Central Connecticut State University on December 19, 2009 with a B.F.A. in Theatre-Acting summa cum laude and participated in the university's commencement on May 22, 2010. An honors program scholar, she is currently employed at Oddfellows Playhouse in Middletown as a free-lance artist and plans to move to Minneapolis, Minnesota with Zac in August.
- Adam Rapp, son of Laurie and Richard Rapp, received the Boy Scouts of America's highest honor, the Eagle Scout Award, on May 8, 2010 at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Middletown. Adam, a graduate of Middletown High School, will be joining his brother Alex (also an Eagle Scout) at the University of Connecticut in the fall. His proud grandmother is Frances Rollish

Congratulations, Farewell, and Godspeed:

Congratulations and best wishes to Ann-Marie Illsley, our organist/music director upon her May 23, 2010 graduation from Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Chemistry and Molecular Biology. Ann-Marie will be pursuing her M.A. in Chemistry at Wesleyan in the fall. Ann-Marie concluded her four-year music ministry here at St. Paul on May 16, and was honored at the worship services and coffee hour. We wish you God's blessings and every happiness in your new venture. We'll miss you!

Our deepest sympathy to:

- Art and Carolyn Krenz upon the death of their friend Andy Tabak
- the family and friends of Mary Bloomquist. Pastor Hawksley officiated at her funeral and committal services on May 15, 2010 at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home and Swedish Cemetery.
- Jason and Deanna Ray and all their family upon the death of Jason's sister Carrie Duclos
- Edie Tyler upon the death of her niece Sharon Behm Rosano's husband Joseph.

May God comfort you all with His love and peace.

Sunday Morning Transportation Service Begins!

Four people have volunteered to drive people to church. If you would like a ride to church, call the church office at (860) 346-9107, and leave a message. Arrangements will be made and you will be notified. This service is sponsored by the Long-Range Planning Committee.

Thank You Notes

"Thank you so much for the gift certificate and box of chocolates for Administrative Assistant Day. Your thoughtfulness makes working here a pleasure. Sincerely, Barbara Paola"

A thank you was received from the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for giving \$2,118.00 in 2009 for Mission Support beyond the congregation for synodical and churchwide ministries of the ELCA.

"Dear Rev. Hawksley, We would like to say "thank you" to you and the ladies from your church for the wonderful luncheon last week. It took a lot of teamwork and we all appreciated it. The food was delicious! Again, thank you. Sincerely, Lynette Milardo, Therapeutic Director, Wadsworth Glen"

The July/August Newsletter Deadline is June 13 Please place any items for the newsletter in the secretary's mailbox at the church or email: leb1298@yahoo.com. Thank you! Also: If your mailing address is incorrect, or if you wish to pick up your newsletter in the narthex, OR if you are not receiving the newsletter by email and wish to, please notify the church office.

Newsletter sponsors are needed monthly for 2010. The cost is \$25 or two people can share it for 12.50 each. Please call the church office if you are interested. The sponsor for the June newsletter is Betsy Stielau.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

Happy birthday to anyone who has a birthday in June! Due to the loss of the electronic copy of the birthday file by the newsletter editor, the June birthdays were not available at the time of the newsletter publication. I sincerely apologize - Lois

COMMUNITY NEWS

Curious about what "treasures" are buried in your yard? Using my metal detector, I'll scour your yard. You keep whatever I find. I promise to keep the excavation neat. The cost is \$25, with \$15 going to St. Paul. Contact Rich Lee at (860) 402-0322 (cell) or (860) 346-5775 (home).

Middletown Kids Health and Safety Day will take place rain or shine on Saturday, June 5 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in front of the Middletown Police Station at 222 Main Street, Middletown. There will be exhibits, educational information, dental and spinal screenings, demonstrations, entertainment and all kinds of fun for the kids. Free admission and free parking at the MiddleOak Parking Garage.

Covenant Village of Cromwell is hosting a free program "Simplify Your Surroundings" with Chris Lutz from Shoreline Moving Assistance on Thursday, June 17 at Bethany Lutheran Church, 50 Court Street, Cromwell. The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and features a complimentary continental breakfast. Please RSVP by Tuesday, June 15 to Janet Carlson at (860) 754-3045.

Celebrate Me Cultural Bazaar will be held Saturday, June 19 (rain date Sunday, June 27) from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the A.M.E. Zion Church at 440 West Street, Middletown. The purpose of this event is to develop strong partnerships, build community ties, and healthy relationships. They are seeking crafters, business vendors, and food vendors for this event. Contact the church office at (860) 344-9527 for further information.

Volunteers are needed for St. Luke's Eldercare Services. Training programs for new volunteers are held in the office on a regular basis. Brighten the life of an elderly person living in your community by assisting with transportation to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, visiting, or just by picking up the phone to say "hello." Become a volunteer and make a difference. Contact Diane Cummings at (860) 347-4551 for more information.

Wherever You Are is a community-based program providing free healthcare services to homeless, nearly homeless, or those in danger of losing their homes at several locations throughout the area. If you or someone you know might benefit from this service, Wherever You Are is available as follows:

New Britain

Friendship Center

- Monday 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Monday 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Salvation Army

- Wednesday 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Meriden

Shelter NOW

- Wednesday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Middletown

Eddy Shelter

- Tuesday 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Shepherd Home

- 1:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Wallingford

Master's Manna

- Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Special Giving 2010

There are a number of Special Funds here at St. Paul to which donations may be made all year long. Some are for the budget, some outreach, and some to help with special off-budget needs. The funds are as follows:

- Fuel Fund – focus in January/February and July/August as well as the last Sunday of the month
- ELCA World Hunger Appeal
- Pennies from Heaven jar – in the Narthex
- Pastor's Discretionary Fund
- Secretary's Wish List – leave in the office
 - scotch tape
 - staples
 - labels
 - 8-1/2 x 11 paper
 - 8-1/2 x 14 paper
- Sexton's Wish List – leave in the kitchen
 - paper towels
 - toilet tissue
 - dish soap/sponges for 2nd level kitchen
 - trash bags
- Tithing Fund
- Memorial Fund
- Kitchen Fund
- Sexton Fund
- St. Vincent de Paul Dinner Fund
- Snow Removal/Lawn Mowing Fund

Please put all donations in an envelope with your name, envelope number, the amount, and the fund to which you are giving, with the exception of those noted above. Thank you for your generous giving!

The Bible Page

<http://www.thebiblepage.webs.com/>

Volume 12, Number 6

JUNE 2010

Alan L. Hawksley, Editor

I was reading the book of James in my Bible this week. I was struck with the introduction to the book provided in my Application Study Bible. May I share the following with you?

“MIRACULOUS!’ ... ‘Revolutionary!’ ... ‘Greatest ever!’ We are inundated by a flood of extravagant claims as we flip the television dial or magazine pages. The messages leap out at us. The products assure that they are new, improved, fantastic, and capable of changing our lives. For only a few dollars, we can have ‘cleaner clothes,’ ‘whiter teeth,’ glamorous hair,’ and ‘tastier food.’ Automobiles, perfume, diet drinks, and mouth wash are guaranteed to bring happiness, friends, and the good life. And just before an election, no one can match the politicians’ promises. But talk is cheap, and too often we soon realize that the boasts were hollow, quite far from the truth.

“‘Jesus is the answer!’ ... ‘Believe in God!’ ... ‘Follow me to church!’ Christians also make great claims but are often guilty of belying them with their actions. Professing to trust God and to be His people, they cling tightly to the world and its values. Professing all the right answers, they contradict the gospel with their lives.

“With energetic style and crisp, well-chosen words, James confronts the conflict head-on. It is not enough to talk the Christian faith, he says; we must live it. ‘What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?’ (2:14). The proof of the reality of our faith is a changed life.

“Genuine faith will inevitably produce good deeds. This is the central theme of James’s letter, around which he supplies practical advice on living the Christian life.”¹

I was listening to Bernie Dymet’s *A Different Perspective* on the radio this week and he was talking about the problems with Church. It seemed to fit very closely with the message of James’s Letter, so let me share some of Bernie’s message “It’s not that hard really.”

Today we’re looking at the fact that so often we come to the Church with a lack of commitment. We come to God’s family with a lack of commitment and a sense of judgment and we wonder why this whole Church thing doesn’t feel too much like community.

Isn’t it easy to go to a family, to a Church, and to expect to be served rather than to be one of the servants? I’ve heard that term ‘Church shopping’ so many times. It’s about being consumers. It’s about saying, ‘well what’s in it for me?’ But for me, the only reason that I should be part of this Church rather than that Church is that God has called me to be in this Church.

Well it’s all well and good to talk about trees and roots and pots and figs and grapes but exactly how do we do this? Romans chapter 12, verse 2 says this:

“Don’t be conformed to the ways of this world.”

Can I take the word *world* out and replace it with *Church* for a minute? Don’t be conformed to the ways of this Church. Sometimes in our Churches, sometimes in our families we’re dysfunctional. We spoke recently about that lonely little fig tree that found itself planted in a vineyard.

And sometimes what’s going on in our Churches is that the grapevine is screaming at the figs, ‘Be a grape, be a grape’. And the fig tree, on the other hand, is screaming at the grapevines, ‘Be a fig tree, be a fig tree’. Seems to me an inherent part of our flawed humanity is that we expect everyone to be like us, think like us, behave like us, see things the way we do. Only then are they acceptable, only then can they be right, right?

Yet God’s word teaches us that we are all different and complimentary. Me, I’m not someone for having lots of people around all the time. I like being on my own. That’s okay but sometimes it’s been a problem. I’ve spent some time thinking about that, learning, growing, changing and my motivation is to proclaim God’s word to you just as I am right now.

So, I bring gifts and weaknesses to the table that you don’t. And you bring gifts and weaknesses to the table that I could never bring. If we can only be who we are and open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit, to work out His love in us, what a wonderful place Church would be.

Yes grow, yes become mature, yes become Holy but not trying to be grapes if we’re a fig tree. If I’m a fig tree I should have big, sweet, succulent, juicy figs whatever the grape vines over there happen to think about me. We can over spiritualize this stuff sometimes but there are so many little things that you and I can do to exercise our giftings in our Church. To put our roots down, to share the goodness of God in our lives with other people.

Sometimes we see someone when we go to Church on Sunday morning and think, ‘I don’t know, maybe they just need someone to lean on. Maybe I should invite them out for a cup of coffee or do something like that during the week’. Maybe during the week you think about someone, maybe you could pick up the phone and call them.

Can I suggest that it should be a priority for each one of us to build at least one or two close friendships in the family of God? It’s these little things, the phone calls, the words of encouragement, the words of appreciation, the prayers. If you

believe that God has planted you in this family, will you also believe that He will lead you to people for whom He has custom made fruit hanging off your branches? People who need to eat the figs just like the ones that you produce.

You may have heard me talk about this verse before and I come back to it reasonably frequently because I think it speaks into a problem that lies at the heart of the dysfunction that you see in many a Church. The Apostle Paul explaining how different we are and how stupidly we behave around those differences and it's such a straight forward explanation. Let's look at 1 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning at verse 13:

"For in the one spirit we've all been baptized into the one body, Jews, Greeks, slaves, free. And we were all made to drink of the one spirit. Indeed the body doesn't consist of just one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'because I'm not a hand I don't belong to the body' would that make it any less a part of the body?"

"What if the ear were to say, 'because I'm not an eye I don't belong to the body', that wouldn't make it any less part of the body either. If the whole body were an eye, that would be useless, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?"

"As it is Gods arranged the members of the body, each one of them just as He chose. If all were a single member where would the body be? As it is there are many members but one body. And so the eye can't say to the hand, 'I don't need you'. Nor can the head say to the feet, 'I don't need you'."

"On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are actually indispensable and those members of the body that we think less honorable, we actually clothe them with great honor and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect. Whereas our more respectable members don't need that."

"But Gods arranged the body in such a way, giving greater honor to the inferior members that there may be no dissention within the body but the members may have the same care for one another."

"If one member suffers all should suffer with it. If one member is honored all rejoice with it. Now you, you are the body of Christ and individually you're members of it. And God's appointed, in the Church, first Apostles, Prophets, Teachers then deeds of power then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues."

"Are all of us Apostles? Are all of us Prophets? Are all of us Teachers? Do all of us work miracles? Do all of us possess gifts of healing? Do all of us speak in tongues? Do all of us interpret? To which the obvious answer is, of course not."

Why is it that we compare ourselves with one another? God is saying, 'Look, you're all different, I made you that way, I put you together. Stop comparing, stop wishing you were something different, someone different. Stop feeling inadequate. Stop getting annoyed with the next guy who's different and be

committed to the body because you are part of the body whether you realize it or not.'

Do you get it? It doesn't really require that much explanation does it? It's blindingly, glimpsingly obvious and yet you see this dissention, this nonsense, this carry on in many a Church. People asked to do things they were never made to do and then being criticized because they didn't do a good job at it.

A gifted administrator or accountant or caregiver or whatever is so often left to stew in the pew when there's an obvious crying need for their gifts and abilities in the family of God. It's not hard is it? My friend, get committed. Get committed to being a part of the body of Christ. Because we need to be committed in order to flourish. We need to have courage to stop judging.

We need to set ourselves free from the weaknesses of other people by not judging them and we need to have practical acts of love going on. Look, I know it won't always be convenient. I know some days it's going to hurt. But then my hunch is that it was always meant to be that way.

The flesh won't always like it and probably will get hurt along the way but will you be a part of the body of Christ? Will you go into the House of the Lord and flourish where God has planted you. The Bible says:

"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the House of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God."²

Prayer:

Dear Listening Father,

In this world, You have surrounded me with a sea of others who know You. They are my fellowship and my accountability. They are in my thoughts, and their presence echoes in my prayers. Alone I am nothing more than a grain of sand, but together we are a beach, a coast, or even the world.

There are those whose existence seems merely a playground for jealousies and strife. Every word uttered from their lips is an arrow aimed at the heart of the unity of our fellowship. Hold us together, Lord. Let there be no missing member in the anatomy of this family. Together we can hold back the floods, and we can rescue the victims from the abuse this world strives to inflict upon them.

Hear my prayers, dear Father, and receive them with Your tender mercy. Help us to take Your message to those who do not understand the expanse of Your love. And make us an example of the kingdom we represent so others can understand why we choose to lay aside those things seen to follow after that which is unseen. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

¹ Taken from the Introduction to the epistle of James; "Life Application Study Bible"; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL and Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.

² "It's Not That Hard Really"; A Different Perspective, with Berni Dymet; christianityworks.com, a ministry of Back to the Bible International.

CHURCH CALENDAR



St. Paul Lutheran Church
June 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
				New England Synod Assembly		
6 11:40am Semi-Annual Congregation Meeting 12:30pm Special Congregation Meeting	7 6:00pm NCD Health Care Team at Beth & Bill Stielau's	8 6:30pm Evangelism & Social Ministry 7:30pm Thrivent	9 3:15pm Pastor conducts worship service at One MacDonough Place	10 10:15am Pastor conducts worship service at Wadsworth Glen 3:30pm Stewardship Committee 3:30pm Confirmation 7:00pm Rehearsal	11	12 24 hour Relay for Life from 12:00 noon until 12:00 noon 6/13
13 10:30am Confirmation at Traditional Worship Service 11:30am Coffee Hour (Parish Hall) 11:45am Finance Committee Relay for Life ends at 12:00 noon Newsletter article deadline	14 7:00pm Congregation Council	15 3:00pm Bike and Build arrives supper	16 8:00am Bike and Build leaves 8:00pm Long Range Planning/Fundraising/ Publicity Committee at Robin Stauffer's	17 10:00am WELCA meeting 11:30am WELCA luncheon outing	18	19 10:00am Adopt-a-Road
20 9:00am Worship Service of Holy Communion 10:00am Outdoor refreshment time	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Church Picnic with Christ Lutheran Church 9:00am Gather 10:00am Worship Service 11:00am Picnic	28	29	30	Vacation Bible School Sunday 6/27 – Thursday 7/1 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.		

BUILDING PARTNER
Rock of Refuge (ROR) Tabernacle
 Sunday Worship Service: 1:00-3:00pm
 Tuesday Prayer Service: 7:00-9:00pm
 Women's Bible Study 1st and 3rd Wednesday 7:00-9:00pm
 (Library)
 Men's Bible Study 2nd and 4th Wednesday 7:00-9:00pm
 (Library)

SUNDAY SCHEDULE
 (Unless otherwise noted on individual Sundays)
**9:00 AM Contemporary Worship Service of Holy
 Communion**
9:30 AM Coffee Hour
10:30 AM Traditional Worship Service of Holy Communion

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Parish Hall
 Sunday 6:30 p.m.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
Parish Hall
 Monday 6:30 p.m.
 Wednesday 5:45 p.m.
 Thursday 5:45 p.m.

Rainforest Adventure VBS Registration Form



Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Home e-mail address: _____

Child's age: _____ Last school grade completed: _____

Home congregation (if any): _____

In case of emergency (when the parent/guardian cannot be reached) please contact:

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Please list any food allergies (including food) the VBS staff should be aware of

Person responsible for picking up this child at the end of VBS each day:

Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Rainforest Adventure VBS Covenant

I would like to be a part of Rainforest Adventure VBS.

- I promise to be respectful towards all leaders, and do as they instruct me.
- I promise to be respectful towards all of the other kids. I will not hurt others with my body or my words.
- I promise to be respectful towards the building. I will not run inside, or be out of control.
- I promise not use bad language.
- I will stay for the entire time that VBS is in session. I will be there from 5:30pm until 8pm, unless my parent or guardian picks me up early.

I understand that if I do not do these things, I will not be able to stay at Rainforest Adventure Vacation Bible School.

Child Signature _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____