

December 2022

The LINK

newsletter of St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Pittsford, NY

PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear People of St. Paul's,

One of my favorite ways to engage in this season of mystery, hope, and joy is through poetry. The beautiful way that poets engage the story always helps me to experience it anew. And some of my favorite poetry of all is the poetry we find in our trove of hymnody! Those of you reading our devotional this Advent have I hope enjoyed some of the hymn texts Jon has picked out to complement the weekly themes – I know I have!

Some years ago, I learned about Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, who writes hymn texts inspired by scripture, but also often offering commentary on current social issues. They are set to familiar hymn tunes. I came across this one recently, that addresses the reality that the Holy Family were refugees (Matthew 2:13-23). I couldn't help but think of our recent venture into accompanying an asylum-seeking family. I have been moved by your outpouring of generosity of time, energy, and items for these people who share with Mary and Joseph the experience of seeking safety in a new land. I share the text here, in hopes it might inspire your own reflection, as we continue in this ministry and anticipate Christ's birth.

In hope,

Pastor Johanna

When Mary and Joseph Sought Safety and Shelter (Tune: "Let All Things Now Living")

When Mary and Joseph sought safety and shelter,
Who welcomed them gladly? Who said, "Come and stay"?
Who said, "Come inside here"? Who gave food and water?
Who offered a place to keep cold winds away?
O Lord, we remember, and sometimes we wonder:
You no longer need a small bed filled with hay.
So how can we welcome you, Jesus our Savior?
And how can we show that we love you today?

We look all around us and see the world's children,
And so we remember they're precious to you.
As nations have chosen to help or to hurt them,
O Lord, we confess nations do unto you.
The youth in detention, the poor, hungry orphan,
The neighbor, the stranger, the child in the pew:
May we reach in love and give safety and welcome.
By loving God's children, we welcome you, too.

From the author: "When Mary and Joseph Sought Safety and Shelter"

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, who came to us as a little child, we pray for children today, including those separated from their families at the border between the United States and Mexico, the thousands of immigrant children and youth who are in detention centers in the U.S., and the little ones who must appear in court before an immigration judge alone. When we work for the rights of children and families, we are giving a gift to Jesus.

Text: Copyright © 2018 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

Included in God's World is Changing: [New Hymns for Advent and Christmas \(2022\)](#).

Email: carolynshymns@gmail.com; New Hymns: www.carolynshymns.com/

Church News & Statistics

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December 11th

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December 24th @ 5:30PM

Christmas Eve Worship

December 25th @ 10AM

Christmas Day Lessons & Carols
(hymn-singing!)

St. Paul's Sunday Worship!

Our 9:30am Service of Holy Communion is in person & live-streamed each week.

SAFETY MEASURES:

We continue to encourage vaccination/booster. We also have two air purifiers continuously running.

Livestream & In-person Service Attendance Statistics

"WE COUNT BECAUSE YOU COUNT"

Using 1.7 as a multiplier

(most common multiplier used by churches to measure online attendance)

| Date | Unique Viewers | Est. Viewers Total | In Person Total |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 11/6 | 31 | 53 | 66 |
| 11/13 | 19 | 32 | 60 |
| 11/20 | 28 | 48 | 59 |
| 11/27 | 26 | 44 | 67 |
| Totals | 104 | 177 | 252 |
| Avg per Service | 26 | 44 | 63 |

Christmas Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve Communion and Candle-lighting Dec. 24th at 5:30pm

O Come, All Ye Faithful! This will be our traditional Christmas Eve worship, and will include communion, lots of great music, a children's sermon and adult sermon, and candle-lighting. Come early to get a good seat and hear the music, starting around 5pm.

Christmas Day Lessons and Carols Dec. 25th at 10am

Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year, and so we will worship the newborn king! We'll start a little later to accommodate some Christmas morning family traditions, then we will hear again the story of salvation history and sing lots of carols in this service of lessons and carols.

We hope to see you for one or both of these services!

Volunteer for lay ministry [HERE](#).

December Lay Ministry Calendar

| | 12/4 | 12/11 | 12/18 | 12/24 | 12/25 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Acolyte | Zach Bingemann | Landon Dechau | Derek Gonzalez | Landon & Chris Dechau | |
| Communion Setup/Cleanup | Jamie Foster | Jim/Mara Berndt | Theo Haynes | Robin Hoagland | Please Volunteer |
| Ushers | Leisa & Paul North | Jim Berndt & Wes Wyatt | Please Volunteer | Please Volunteer | Please Volunteer |
| Lector/Prayers Reader | Andrea/Otto Sauer | Richard Johnson | Sue Wyatt | Mike Serve | Elizabeth Conderman & Please Volunteer (4 needed) |
| Communion Assistant | Jamie Foster | Jennifer Olivo | Please Volunteer | Elizabeth Conderman | Please Volunteer |
| Altar Linens | Mara Berndt | Mara Berndt | Leisa North | Mara Berndt | Please Volunteer |
| Altar Care | Mara Berndt | Mara Berndt | Mara Berndt | Mara Berndt | Mara Berndt |
| Flower Delivery | Jamie Foster | Sandy Link | Leisa/Paul North | N/A | Please Volunteer |
| Food Cupboard | Jim/Mara Berndt | Jim/Mara Berndt | Jim/Mara Berndt | Jim/Mara Berndt | Jim/Mara Berndt |
| Counters | N/A | Mara Berndt & Theo Haynes | N/A | N/A | Mara Berndt & Helen Fee |



Altar Guild & Other Updates

POINSETTIAS



Envelopes are in the pews to sponsor a poinsettia for Christmas Eve.

The last day to submit your information is **December 11th**.

You may pick up your Poinsettia(s) after the service on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

CHRISTMAS EVE POINSETTIA DISPLAY



We are looking for others who would be interested in assisting with the poinsettias being displayed in the chancel for Christmas Eve.

If this is something you're interested in, please contact Mara Berndt or Leisa North.



VASES NEEDED

We are in need of vases 5-9" tall with a base 3-6". We use these to deliver Sunday flower arrangements to our homebound members. If you have some unneeded vases lying around, bring them over and place them in the bin labeled "Flower Vase Donation" in the foyer.



Amazon supports non-profit organizations, including St. Paul's!

When you shop Amazon at any time, but especially for the upcoming holidays, start out at smile.amazon.com. When you do, St. Paul's will get a small cash back bonus (0.5%) for every amount spent.

The easiest way is to click on our personal link:
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/16-1142565>

Creche Blessing

Bring your creche/nativity set from home on December 4th and set it up in the foyer. Bring a note saying who brought it and where it came from, and if you wish, explaining its significance for you or your family. During coffee hour, we'll say a prayer over these home devotional tools, that they would remind us all of the place we prepare for the coming Christchild.

All About Advent

Liturgy Notes: Advent Wreath

One of the staples of the Advent season is the Advent wreath. But where does it come from, what does it mean, and what is its purpose?

The Advent wreath has its roots in the pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People sought the return of the sun in the dark time of the year (at the winter solstice) by lighting candles and fires. As early as the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to represent Christ's coming into the world. Using this same symbolism, the Advent wreath developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of the waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath, a circle, came to represent the eternal victory over death through Jesus Christ. The evergreens were a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lighted candles were a reminder of the light of Christ brought into the world.

In addition to the Advent wreath being used in worship, it is also appropriate for daily use in home devotions. The making of the wreath can be a family activity, using materials gathered from the yard or garden. Lighting the candles each night as a family, and subsequently watching them burn lower and lower as we approach Christ's birth, is a powerful reminder in our homes of the waiting and anticipation we have at the coming of Christ.

(Taken from ELCA webpage:
<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/FAQs/Advent-Wreath.aspx>)

Advent Devotional: Out of the Blue



This year's devotional continues through Christmas Day. Each week we trace God's plans for justice and peace with the genealogy of Jesus and the witness of the saints who followed him. And, we see how God is inviting us into imagining something surprising and new.

Each Sunday's devotion introduces the story and character of the week (warning: some of the stories of Jesus' ancestors are difficult ones!). Sunday includes a reflection, a question for reflection, a prayer, and a hands-on, progressive Advent project: the creation of a Jesse Tree in your home, with a new item to add each week. The other days explore the lives of saints who live on in the legacies of those in Jesus' family tree, calling on us to do the same.

To receive the devotionals via email, click [HERE](#) or email stpauls@stpaulspittsford.org.



Upcoming Events

Dorcas Rachel Women

Thursday, December 8, 2022

Christmas Luncheon

(Dorcas Room)

11:00am-Fellowship

11:30am-Meal

Devotional: Shari MacFarlane

Hostesses: Sandy Link, Marcia Sheldon,
and Leisa North

What to bring:

*A dish to pass

*Your Secret Santa gift

*Christmas cards

(if you would like to share them)

*Monetary gift to the Pittsford Food
Cupboard

As always..... all are welcome!

Please RSVP to Leisa North
by: Monday, December 5th by 4pm.

leisanorth@gmail.com

Choral Scholars Recital **December 11th after Worship**

Please join us & enjoy some music from
our wonderful choral scholars:

Josh Bassette
David Falterman
Laura O'Neill
Helena Webster

Articles for the January **issue of the "Link"**
must be received by 9:00am on Monday,
December 19th.

Please send them to the church office at
stpauls@stpaulspittsford.org.

Please make submissions in MS Word
format.

Maggie's Kids Hat and Mitten Collection

Now - January 8th



The Dorcas Rachel Women invites all to bring in hats,
mittens, gloves, and scarves to hang on our "Maggie's
Kids" Christmas Tree located in the church foyer.

Monetary donations are also welcomed. Please write
DRW- Maggie's Kids on the memo line.

Maggie Harris operates Community Lutheran Ministry
on Joseph Avenue in the city of Rochester. Her year-
round ministry is solely focused on the children of
the 14621 zip code, currently one of the most
impoverished and crime-ridden area of the city.
Please help Maggie keep her kids warm this winter!

If you have a donation but can't get it to the church,
please give me a call/email and I'll be happy to pick it
up! Thank you, Leisa North
leisanorth@gmail.com

Children's Christmas Pageant **December 18th after worship**

Join us to hear the children tell the story of
Jesus' birth through word and song. This will
also be the debut of our children's choir.

For participants:

- Rehearsal, Dec. 4 after worship – choir
and parts assignments
- Rehearsal, Dec 10, 4:30-5:30 – play, choir,
costumes, and run through
- Performance: please plan to be at church
by 10:30 (better yet, for worship at 9:30!)

Fellowship

Fellowship Friends

Time to draw new Fellowship Friends Groups
for January 2023!

There will be a new sign-up sheet in the lobby at St
Paul's from **December 11th - January 1st.**

You can also sign up by sending an e-mail to Jim Berndt
at jrberndt@icloud.com or the office at
stpauls@stpaulspittsford.org.

We will have a Fellowship meeting on **Sunday, January
8th after worship** to pick the NEW Fellowship Friends
group for January – June 2023.

What is Fellowship Friends?

A small groups of 6 to 8 church members that will
gather outside of St. Paul's for various, fun filled
outings/events.

These small groups will rotate and regroup with
different members every 6 months.

Ideas of events to build friendships are endless. Some
examples may include: a walk at the mall; game night;
an ethnic food tour; a breakfast bash; book reviews;
comedy night; a theatrical performance, Bible & brew, a
ball game, a pool party; a wine tasting.

No stress; no pressure... just good old fashioned FUN!

"Fellowship Friends" will enhance the relationships you
currently have and will foster new friendships as we
grow closer together in Christ's love!



Gift Ideas for Christmas

As you think about what to get your
loved ones from Christmas, consider a
gift to someone who truly needs it
through ELCA's Good Gifts program.

Some gifts available:

- Send a girl to school: \$40
- Goat: \$50
- Chicks: \$10
- Piglet: \$30
- Cow: \$50/share or \$500/full
- Water filter: \$30
- Fish farm: \$50/share or \$250/full
- Honeybees: \$20
- Latrine: \$150
- Computer: \$800
- School supplies: \$10/child or
\$300/class

See www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.org for
more gift ideas and details.



Mission & Service

St. Paul's is Accompanying an Asylum-seeking Family!

Meet the Mutombo Family: Desiré (dad), Odine (mom), Exaucé (boy, 10), Medine (girl, 8), Aicha (girl, 7), Francisco (boy, 4), Stephanio (boy, 2), and Rayan (boy, 2 months). A picture of the children is to the right.

Some St. Paul's members have met and spent time with the family, getting to know them & helping where needed.

Some examples include:

- The older children attended Family Faith Night and picked out some winter clothing items that were generously donated.
- Spent time with the family in their home & cleaned as needed.
- Spent time with the children at the RRRS office during English lessons.

Here are some ways you can be involved:

- Be on a rotation to "check in" with the family, committing to spend time with them on a regular basis. This is the work of relationship, and includes getting to know the family and listening to them and what they have to offer.
 - Saturdays from 10am-noon, older children and adults have an English class at the RRRS office. We need someone to spend time with the younger kids (under 10), reading to them, playing with them, keeping them busy and conversing with them so the older family members can focus on English. Sign up [HERE](#).
- Pray! One of the most powerful and important ways to help this family is simply to pray for their success, safety, and well-being.

The ELCA's definition of mission is "accompaniment." It is the most important way we can live out the Gospel and spread the good news. We hope you will prayerfully consider how you might help accompany this family in these coming months, as we pursue this ministry of welcome and hospitality.

Read more about the ELCA's understanding of accompaniment [HERE](#), or here: <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Global-Mission#Accompaniment>.



Blankets Needed!

Blankets are needed for the refugee and asylum-seeking families in our area, most of whom come from warmer climates and without many possessions. [RRRS](#) is hoping to receive at least 75 blankets in order to provide a minimum of 1 blanket per family. There is a box in the foyer labeled "Blankets for RRRS" to collect donations.



Winter Accessories Needed

We are collecting winter accessories in gently used or new condition (boots, hats, gloves, winter appropriate socks) - all sizes, and coats for teens & adults.

Community Involvement

Seafarer's International House



Seafarers International House is a social agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and a ministry partner of the ELCA synods of Metro New York, New Jersey, New England, Upstate New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Upper Susquehanna(PA) and Delaware-Maryland.

While its roots are decidedly Lutheran, Seafarers International House's mission clientele are multi-national and multi-faith. We offer pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy, and prayer to all seafarers and immigrants without trepidation.

Women of the ELCA are knitting hats for Seafarers and sending them to the Seafarer's International House to be distributed ALL YEAR LONG!

Most of the recipients are men so darker colors are appreciated.

The preferred yarn is Red Heart Super Saver or any worsted weight yarn- **NOT WOOL.**

There is a collection box in the Fellowship Hall, you can also find pattern directions attached to the box!

If you have any questions please see Leisa North.

Some Ways to Serve the Community

A few of our ministry partners have reached out in need of volunteers. Consider serving in one of these ways:

Elderberry Express needs volunteer drivers to help elderly people get to appointments, etc.

Contact: 585-248-6237 or

elderberryexpress@gmail.com

Mothers in Need of Others needs volunteers MWF, 10am-12pm to sort donations of baby items for mothers in need. Note: children can help here!

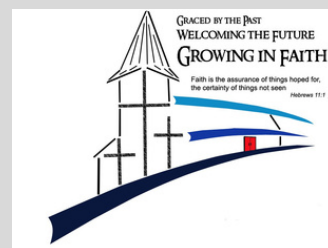
Contact:

MothersInNeedOfOthers@gmail.com

St. John's Home is seeking volunteers for their ecumenical worship service on Mondays at 11AM.

Contact: (585) 760-2634 or email

sculp@stjohnsliving.org



ST. PAUL'S VISION STATEMENT

To spread the Word, build a strong community, and make the world a better place.

ST. PAUL'S MISSION STATEMENT

St. Paul's is a welcoming Christian family. We are created by God, saved by Jesus Christ, God's Son, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Through joyous worship and Mission Commitment, St. Paul's furthers the word of God's Saving Grace.

Introduction to Matthew's Gospel

With the start of Advent, we began a year of reading through Matthew's Gospel. To help you get the most out of this year, here are some traits that make Matthew unique:

· **Matthew is super organized.** Starting with his genealogy in chapter 1, you will find that every placement of every statement and story is done with great intention. The overall structure makes this clear: there is a Preamble (birth narrative), five "books" (each addressing a different aspect of a life of faith, and each consisting of narrative followed by discourse), and finally an Epilogue (passion and resurrection narrative). He also does all kinds of interesting things with numbers throughout.

· **Mission to the gentiles.** From the beginning, with the mention of four gentile women in Jesus' genealogy, and the magi from the East being Jesus' first visitors, all the way to Jesus' last command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." Matthew has a clear interest in getting this message out to the non-Jewish community. This good news is for all the world.

· **Jewish audience.** Still, Matthew clearly has a Jewish audience in mind. This Gospel is replete with quotes from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), as if to say, "See? Just like the sacred scriptures said. Jesus is the real deal, and he's here to fulfill the law and the prophets."

· **Prominence of Peter.** It is in this Gospel that Jesus tells Peter, "You are [the rock] on which I'll build my Church." This Gospel is the reason we say that St. Peter stands at the entrance to the pearly gates: in Matthew, he is given the "keys to the kingdom."

· **The Church.** Speaking of which, this is the only Gospel in which Jesus talks explicitly about the Church that would be his continued presence on earth.

· **Interest in the law.** This goes with Matthew's orderly nature, perhaps. But while Matthew's Jesus is a stickler for the law, it is not for the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law – that is, the steadfast love and mercy at the heart of the law.

· **The presence of God.** It is from Matthew's Gospel that we get God's name, "Emmanuel," God-with-us. Jesus' very last words in this Gospel are, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the age." And all throughout it is clear that God is present, though often in such unexpected ways that it goes unnoticed by righteous and wicked alike.

I pray that God's presence is not unnoticed by you, though, as we delve into Matthew's Gospel this year! Here's to a year of experiencing the Good News through the mind, heart, and pen of St. Matthew!