

The Link



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

January 2021

Pastor Page:

"The world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around... But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. And I see God working..." (The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, April 3, 1968)

Where did you see God made manifest in 2020?

When we cheerfully handed out Star Gifts in January 2020, I had no idea how important this question would be. "Look at the gift written on your colorful star," I instructed, "and watch to see how God is made manifest through that gift in the coming year."

Who knew how dearly we would long to see God's shining presence with us in that darkest year in recent history? When I have asked people this year what gift they had, they always remember, and often tell me with a chuckle, as if to say, "And boy, did I need it this year!" God does always give us just what we need when we need it, right?

I am looking forward to celebrating with you on Epiphany (which we will celebrate Jan 3), as we hear from some people about the ways God has made an appearance to shine light into the darkness of 2020. In a year in which the term "doom-scrolling" became well-known, and we practically expected each day to hear more bad news, and every bad thing that happened was punctuated with an exasperated, "Ack, 2020!" – this practice of actively seeking God can be a lifeline for us. Because friends: I believe God

is with us in the darkness. In fact, I think God is with us *even more profoundly* in the darkness. After all, as Martin Luther King, Jr. observed in 1968, another notoriously difficult year, "only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."

I need to see those stars, my friends. I need to see those glimmers of light. I admit that it has been hard work this past year, striving to bring you some good news each week, to keep all of our hearts aimed toward the source of all light and life. And that is why I'm looking forward to hearing the good news from you: I need to see how God has shined in your life, how God has been made manifest in your dismal days, how God has sparkled even more brightly in the dark expanse of the nighttime sky.

I hope you will share those reflections by sending in a video to share during worship (instructions later in this newsletter). Or if you're not comfortable with making a video, I hope you will write something that I can read during worship. Or if you're not comfortable even with that, I hope you will share confidentially, just with me.

Where did your star gift twinkle away the darkness, even if just for a small moment? *Where was God made manifest in your life in 2020?*

In His Light,
Pastor Johanna

SERVICE ATTENDANCE

“WE COUNT BECAUSE YOU COUNT”

In November we averaged 47-50 unique devices for our streamed Sunday worship services. Multiplying this by 1.8 gives a sense of our weekly attendance. Many also watch after the fact. In addition, many are watching the recorded service after the livestream.

December attendance numbers will be published in the February 2021 Link.



PASTORAL ACTS

No pastoral acts for December 2020

St. Paul's Vision

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

Our 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.

In the January Link

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❖ January Calendar can be found online:
www.stpaulspittsford.org

A Prayer for New Year's Eve

Eternal God, you have placed us in a world of space and time, and through the events of our lives you bless us with your love. Grant that in the new year we may know your presence, see your love at work, and live in the light of the event that gives us joy forever - the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

ELW

St. Paul's Congregation Council Meeting

Church Council met on December 15, 2020

Annual Meeting: Council is focused on preparing for the Annual Meeting, which will take place Sunday, January 31 following worship. We are doing our best to anticipate both income and expenditures in another highly unpredictable year. We want to be effective stewards of the St. Paul's resources, and this year that involves more guesswork than usual.

Benevolence Giving: The Congregation of St. Paul's has been extremely generous in their giving to the Benevolence fund this year. Council voted to distribute the \$3700 in that dedicated account to the Upstate Synod (to support other ELCA congregations in the region); LOOP Ministries; and RAIHN/Family Promise. This is financial support above and beyond what the church budgeted for 2020.

Council Membership: Kiki Coffey and Anne Olivia Cincotta will step down from council at the end of the current term. We are so grateful for their gifts of time and service to the church!

Council will meet again by Zoom on Tuesday, January 19 at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Jamie Foster, Council President



Opportunities to serve in 2021

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We anticipate that 2021 will be an exciting year of transition back to being together for worship, fellowship and faith formation. We will be looking for ways to build on what we have done in 2020 and thinking about how our ministries might now change and grow. There are many opportunities to serve St Paul's, and to help shape where we will dedicate our time, energy and financial resources to serve our congregation and community.

**Congregation Council** needs at least one new adult member and a youth representative.

**The Fellowship Committee** is in search of a new chairperson.

**Faith Formation** (formerly Christian Education) is looking for a chairperson as well.

**The Finance Committee** would benefit from one or two new members.

**Property & Maintenance** could use help periodically with projects around church.

Each of these serves important needs of St Paul's, and being part of these leadership groups is a wonderful way to get to know fellow church members. If you would like to learn more about what these groups do and how you can get involved, please get in touch:

Congregation Council - Jamie Foster:  
[jpfoster.foster@gmail.com](mailto:jpfoster.foster@gmail.com)

Faith Formation - Pastor Johanna:  
[pastorjohanna@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:pastorjohanna@stpaulspittsford.org)

Fellowship - Mara Berndt:  
[mberndt49@gmail.com](mailto:mberndt49@gmail.com)

Finance - Mark Mette:  
[mmette2000@yahoo.com](mailto:mmette2000@yahoo.com)

Property & Maintenance: Ben Casper:  
[benjamin.t.casper@gmail.com](mailto:benjamin.t.casper@gmail.com)

We look forward to your help leading St. Paul's into 2021 and beyond!

## *From the Church Office*

Articles for the **February issue of the "Link"** must be received by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>.

We will continue to use Sign-up Genius for **Lay Ministry volunteering** and other opportunities into 2021. If you are having trouble accessing the sign-up page, please email [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org) for assistance.

**Committee leads:** Please remember that your **Annual Committee Reports** are due by **Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>** for inclusion in the Annual Congregational Report to be presented at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>. Thank you for your cooperation. Please let me know if you have any questions at all.

Our **Annual Congregational meeting** will take place on Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> following service. Council will send out notifications for participating in our new Zoom format in the weeks prior to meeting. Please keep an eye out for instructions and information.

**Financial statements for 2021** will be prepared and made available in January.

### *A few things to note:*

- If you have moved, please send your new mailing address and phone number to [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org) to have your church record updated.
- If you would like to sign up for automatic giving or change your donation amount through SimplyGiving, please complete a form and email it to [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org), place it in the office inbox (on Michelle's door), or in the mail to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, PO Box 363, Pittsford, NY 14534.
- If you would like to start/stop receiving offering envelopes, please send a note to that effect to the church office at [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org).

Please submit any reports or articles in MS Word format for ease of inclusion in the full report or newsletter.. *As always, do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or concerns.*

## *HAPPY NEW YEAR!* *Planning Ahead*

**Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Epiphany Sunday – star gifts!**  
9:30 a.m. service  
(Star gift videos due December 31<sup>st</sup>)

**Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Dorcas Rachel Meeting at 9:45 a.m.

**Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**Annual Reports due from Committees**  
(Please email them to [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org))

*Link Articles due*  
(Please email them to [michelle@stpaulspittsford.org](mailto:michelle@stpaulspittsford.org))

**Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>**  
Congregation Council mtg at 6:30 p.m.  
Via Zoom

**Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>.**  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
After 9:30 a.m. service via Zoom

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**Thank you so much.**  
**Merry Christmas and Happy New**  
**Year to you and yours!**





## St. Paul's Annual Congregational Meeting

*Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>  
After 9:30 am service*

### What to Expect at the Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting will take place **over Zoom** following worship on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Watch your email the week before for a link to the meeting. We will:

Vote on our 2021 Budget

- With very few commitment cards returned, and an economically challenging year, we have done our best to faithfully guess how our financial resources will best be used.

Thank some outgoing council members

- Kristen (Kiki) Coffey
- Anne Olivia Cincotta (youth rep)

Vote in some new council members. These are the people/positions standing for election:

- Sue Wyatt and Jen Olivo have agreed to stand as President & Vice-President, respectively, if voted onto the Congregation Council. *Thank you!*
- Youth representative (one-year term)
- 1-2 additional positions

Vote for/confirm our 2021 Synod Assembly delegates. The Bishop election has been moved to this year and will require active involvement of our delegates early on. Such an exciting time!

Please plan to join us for this meeting. We need at least 20 people to sign in for a quorum. We'll try to keep it short!

## Star Gift Submissions

*Where have you seen God manifest this year? Tell us in a video that we will use as a part of the sermon on January 31!*

Here's how:

- Either write/read or speak extemporaneously for 1-2 min about how you saw God manifest through your star gift.
- Record a video:
  - Landscape, not portrait.
  - Front lit, not backlit.
  - Nice and loudly!
- Upload the video to our shared drive by Dec 31.
  - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lf8scdNpRSho80oNsRh7Gv4yBIB-A8gV>
  - This link will also be sent in an email, so find it there! If you let Pastor Johanna know, she will share it with you directly.
- That's it! We'll take care of the rest.

*Thanks for sharing and shining with your friends at St. Paul's!*

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## Confirmation Class

Confirmation class meets over Zoom with other congregations in the conference on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays from 7-7:30pm. Each month we focus on a different aspect of scripture and faith. For January, we will be learning about Jesus' baptism, and ours. Please keep all our young people in prayer as we explore this together!

~\*~



## ***Faith on First, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> after worship***

### ***What do we do with the Old Testament?***

That's the big question for Rachel Held Evans. For a long time, Rachel was troubled by the violence, the strange laws, the treatment of women that she found in the Old Testament. She's not alone. So how do we reconcile images of an angry God with the God of love? How do we find the sweet spot between the Law of Moses and the Grace of Jesus? And how do we not only make peace with the Old Testament, but actually find value in it? Rachel's suggestions might surprise you.

All ages are invited for this time of faith formation over Zoom following worship on Jan 3. We will break into age groups. Adults will study the Old Testament, and kids will do something aimed at their age group. See you then!



## **DORCAS RACHEL CIRCLE**

### **Date:**

Thursday, January 14th

### **Time:**

9:45am Fellowship

10:00am- Meeting

11:00am- Program

### **Place:**

Dorcas Room at St. Paul's Lutheran Church

### **Program:**

Bible Bingo and Bible Trivia

### **Devotions:**

Dorothy Borglum

### **Hostesses:**

Leisa North & Sandy Link

***Bring your paper good donations  
for the Pittsford Food Cupboard.***

**As always..... All are welcome!**

*RSVP to Leisa North by Monday,  
January 11th, 4pm.*



## ***Loop Ministries Urban Food Pantry Fundraiser***

Loop Ministries Urban Food Pantry is having its only fundraiser this year in conjunction with Savers ThriftStore in Webster.  
*Due to Covid, this is the single fundraiser of this type for the year!*

Any donation of the items below will be delivered by Loop to Savers on Saturday, January 30, 2021. Savers will pay 20 cents per pound to Loop for these items.

Please leave your donated items in the lobby of St. Paul's  
~ or ~

Call, text or email Theo Haynes (404-312-6216, haynes.theo@gmail.com ) who will gladly pick up your donations anytime before late January.

Since March 2020, Loop's food pantry has been distributing about four (4!) times as much food each month as they had been before March.

Items needed for this Loop fundraiser are:

- Clothes (men, women, children)
- Hats
- Mittens and gloves
- Scarves
- Ties
- Socks
- Purses
- Wallets
- Bags
- Bed/bath towels
- Sheets
- Blankets
- Pillows
- Curtains
- Tablecloths

*Thank you for all your contributions, donations and support for Loop's Urban Food Pantry!*

## **RAIHN Updates**

RAIHN (the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network) has been extremely busy in 2020 due to the challenges that the pandemic has caused, but it has also been making plans for its future.

- Beginning in May, RAIHN transitioned the Shelter Program from a rotational congregation-based model to utilization of **hotel space for shelter, providing housing for 14 families** since reimagining and reopening the shelter program at the Comfort Inn in Greece.
- RAIHN continues to provide unlimited **food and supply** boxes, **mental health counseling** or referrals, and assistance in **navigating online, remote learning** for the 23 families in the Aftercare & Stabilization Program.
- What keeps them most busy is calls from **families who request assistance with rental arrears or a security deposit** through the Prevention, Diversion, & Rehousing Program. Of the 790 calls for support since January (all of whom were spoken with directly), RAIHN has been able to **assist 85 families**, including 179 children, thus far in 2020, with funding to prevent an eviction or regain housing. These calls have increased in recent weeks, averaging about 50 calls a day.

Looking forward, RAIHN has just hired a Manager of Development & Community Engagement, who will help with the exploration of new models of shelter to meet the needs of the community, as well as a name transition. RAIHN will be transitioning its name to **Family Promise of Greater**

*St. Paul's continues to act as a Support Congregation of Family Promise of Rochester (it's not too early to start practicing the new name!), providing volunteers and meals 4 to 5 times a year to support the Shelter Program in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford and Christ Episcopal Church Pittsford. Watch for upcoming opportunities to get involved in 2021!*

- ☐ *Would I like to record a Star Gift video to send in by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>?*
- ☐ *Did I mark Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> on my calendar for the Annual Meeting?*
- ☐ *Did I remember to send in my 2021 Time & Talent and Pledge form?*
- ☐ *Would I like to attend the Dorcas Rachel Circle on January 14<sup>th</sup>? Did I RSVP to Leisa North?*
- ☐ *How would I like to donate to the Loop Urban Food Pantry's fundraiser this month?*
- ☐ *Am I a committee chair? If so, have I sent in our committee's annual report?*
- ☐ *How would I like to get even more involved with St. Paul's in 2021?!*

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