



The Monthly Epistle

of St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Volume 70, Issue 1 • January 2024

LCMC Three Days of Prayer

January 2-4, 2024

We encourage all to use the Lord's Prayer as an outline to pray as Martin Luther did. Praying the Lord's prayer as an outline can give form and direction to our prayers while providing space for us to pray according to each petition for the churches or people we are focused on that day. Pray each petition one at a time, then pause and pay attention to what comes to mind. Then, pray out of those thoughts or impressions. For instance, pray "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," and pause. Then pray words and thoughts of thanks to God for being your Father, for his love, and for his goodness toward you. Glorify his name in prayer. Then pray the second petition, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and pause. Think of how you would love to see God's love and power break in on those you are praying for, and then pray for them. Pray for relationships, emotions, or bodies to be healed. Pray for someone to become aware of God's love for them. Pray for peace in someone's life or in a region. Continue to pray each petition one at a time, pausing to listen to thoughts, scriptures, and impressions that come to mind, and then pray for that church or that person. No matter how you structure this time of prayer, let's come together as an international association of congregations across the U.S. and around the world to pray.

Day One: For Our Congregations and Leaders

“Lord, we pray that you bless our congregations and leaders with your favor and with your provision and power to carry out the ministry and mission you have in store for us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

What can God do through almost 1,000 congregations in the United States and overseas? How many people can he impact with his love and his power through the tens of thousands of members in the churches of LCMC? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our testimony in the years to come, is that God was at work in and through our association, drawing millions of people to faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord? Discipling millions of people to live as followers of Jesus? Filling millions of people with the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit? Healing millions of people physically, emotionally, and relationally as well as setting others free from whatever held them captive.

We do not believe this is hyperbole. This is, in fact, what God can do in and through our association in the coming years. It is what can happen as the Holy Spirit empowers us to live lives of witness (Acts 1:8), serve as ambassadors for the kingdom of God who have a message of life to proclaim (2 Corinthians 5:20) and God-stories to share (1 Peter 3:15). With that in mind, let us pray for God’s provision and empowerment upon the members, leaders, and churches of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.

Let us pray for new congregations in LCMC to be welcomed and connected in relationships with other congregations and leaders in the association and in their regions of the country. Let us pray for provision: Provision of people. Provision of just the right relationships in our communities at just the right time. Provision of finances for ministry and mission. Provision of favor with community leaders and with those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Provision of training resources to equip God's people for what the Lord wants to do in us and through us. Provision of spiritual gifts that can help us impact others with God's love and God's power. Provision of the joy and boldness to share our God stories that come through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit being stirred within us.

Day Two: For Those Who Don't Yet Know Jesus as Savior and Lord, and For the Prodigals

“Lord, give us your heart for those who don't yet know you as Savior and Lord, and for the prodigals. Create in us a boldness to love them and serve them and to share our God-stories with them as opportunities arise. Open our eyes to be aware of everyday encounters in which we can minister your love and your power to those in need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.”

We know that our Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). And we know that our Heavenly Father is a Father who joyfully welcomes home the prodigals, those who have left the church. Today, let's pray that God will bring us together as one across our association in praying that millions might be drawn to a relationship of love for and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Let's also pray that the Lord might bring home the prodigals who have walked away from a life of faith in the him. Lord, bring home our spouses. Bring home our sons and daughters and grandchildren. Lord, bring home our friends and neighbors. Let's pray that God might set them free from any woundedness or deception that has driven them away from their relationship with him. Let's pray that they might experience God's love and acceptance and affirmation as his beloved daughters and sons.

Day Three: For Our International Partners

“Thank you, Lord, that you have bound us together with these sister churches and leaders and partner networks. We pray that you will give them protection and provision. We pray that you will show us how we can come alongside them, encourage them, and serve with them. Lord, grant our brothers and sisters your favor in their cities, communities, and countries. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

We are blessed as an association to not only have sister churches here in the United States but also sister churches and partner networks in fifteen other countries around the world. Together we are involved in the mission of the gospel that God has called us to and equips us for through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” It is with and through our international partners that we are being empowered by God to live out this reality of being witnesses of what God has done in and through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is with and through our international partners we are enabled by God to live these lives of witness locally, regionally, and throughout entire countries.

Let us pray for God’s protection and provision for our sisters and brothers in other nations. Let us pray for God’s leading in how he would have us reach out to them and partner with them in the coming year. Let us pray for God’s provision of food, medicine, clean water, and safety where these are needed. Let us pray for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to fill our sisters and brothers afresh and grant them God’s favor as they give witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in their cities, communities, and countries.

St. Paul's Congregation Council

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Officers:

President: Perry Bernhardt
Vice-President: Dana Bost
Secretary: Gina Barringer

Helping Hands

Helping Hands is a ministry of St. Paul's that operates with discretion and privacy. It exists to help our church members when unexpected financial needs arise. The committee also considers needs of non-members who have been referred to the committee by a member of St. Paul's.

Anyone who finds themselves in need should not contact the pastor. He does not make these decisions. All decisions are made by the committee.

The church secretary keeps application forms in the office. Come by to fill out your application and it will be forwarded to the committee for consideration.

The Helping Hands Committee is anonymous but you should know that they act on applications quickly, usually in just a few days. That said, sometimes it can take a week or more for everyone's schedules to allow a meeting.

Our annual Cruise 'n BBQ is the major funding for Helping Hands. However, many members also make special offerings for this ministry throughout the year. If you would like to contribute, make sure your check memo line or the blue offering envelope notes: "Helping Hands."

Stephen Ministry

Going into our 4th year, our ministry is going strong, and is very successful. We can always use more caring, praying individuals in it though. I will be gathering another class for our third go-round of commissioning classes.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this ministry, please see me for an applicaiton for the next classes, hopefully, to begin the end of January. If you want to learn more, see me (Jan McCanless), or one of our commissioned lay ministers, and we'll be glad to talk to you about it. I have applications with me at church on Sundays, and would be happy to give you one.

Wrestling with God

Find the 20 **bold** words from Genesis 32:24–28.

S T R U G G L E D D X M L D Y
K R S B M W L I A G B D E E X
D Y I J O X S H A W V U A H I
M B N L G M P T W V N M R C M
J A L S S E L B R L E I S U E
M O N H A L O N E A I R I O N
H I X V I N D S S V I Q P T P
T H I G H D S E T E N N T Z O
H O W C F T F Q L U M A E B J
N A B C H W W G E I B A F D B
P S R P B R F G D R A R N N I
F N J O A I Q M E D Q V A T O
Y J C B V B Z A X A G F E Z E
K A O Y A D K L U W M O Q R A
J B Y N G P I Q K N B Y D W P

And **Jacob** was left **alone**, and there a **man wrestled** with him until the **break** of **day**. And when he saw that he did not **prevail** against him, he **touched** the **hollow** of his **thigh**. And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was **strained** as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for it is **dawn**." And he said, "I will not let you go **unless** you **bless** me." And he said to him, "What is your **name**?" And he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but **Israel**, for you have **struggled** with **God** and with **men**, and have **prevailed**."

Unscramble the verse:

I evah snee dgo afce ot ceaf dna eyt ym ielf sah neeb ieledervd.

Missions

Thank you for your gift of \$355.97 to the ministry of Samaritan's Purse. We praise God that through the gifts and prayers of people like you, we are able to provide aid to disaster victims at home and abroad, as well as collect millions of Operation Christmas Child gifts for children in need.

Thank and God bless you,
Franklin Graham, President

Thank you for your gifts totaling \$710.81, given to Lutheran Disaster Assistance Fund during the months of September, October, and November 2023. To date, the LDA Fund has been able to provide almost \$505,000 in grant doantions to those that have been impacted by floods, mudslides, hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes and earthquakes. Your church is such a faithful, generous supporter of our mission. We are grateful to you for your help. May God bless you for you concern for others.

Pam Koranda
Financial Assistant

We are very grateful for your donation of \$424 to the ministry of Lutheran Military Veterans and Family Members. Thank you for holding the soup & cornbread dinner for us. Your generous gift means so much to us and those we serve. An ornament in honor of your gift has been hung on our tree, which you can see on our Facebook page, and website.

Blessings to you all,
CH Leslie Haines
Executive Director

Many thanks for lifting our holiday spirits with a gracious \$244.83 reminder of your support. It's good to know you're standing with us. May the joy of the Christmas season remain with you throughtout the coming year. Blessings!

Sincerely,
Jim Daly
President, Focus on the Family

Thank you

Thank you to Lori Bernhardt, Alice Davis, Helen Gordon, Don Austin, and Susan Faggart for cooking a turkey for *Three Wide* organization that fed the *Communities In Schools* students and families a Christmas Dinner on December 14th.

A special thanks to Kris Reeder for firing up his smoker and cooking 6 turkeys! I appreciate all your help.

Susan Bernhardt

The Outreach Committee fed about 15 people before we went Christmas Caroling on December 3rd. Because of the forecasted rain, we did not go to the shut-ins, but took a group to Trinity Oaks Health and Rehab. Another group went with Pastor Ryman to Autumn Care and “Decked the Halls” before church service there at 2:00. Thanks to all who came and made a Joyful Noise!

Susan Bernhardt

Our St. Paul’s family provided a tremendous amount of assistance to the *Binns-Counts* community in 2023. We truly make a positive impact on those living in the area.

The congregation was also incredibly generous with their support of the Binns-Counts Christmas outreach. \$1,180 was donated toward the purchase of gifts, and many physical gifts as well. The congregation provided a total of 531 gifts. 550 children were expected to be served in December. We do shine the light of Christ on the area, and help to relieve the pain of poverty.

Thank you to everyone who helped.

Carolyn Canup

Offering for November, 2023

General Fund Offering for the month: \$31,465 • Year-to-Date as of November 30: \$488,013

December General Fund report will be in the January Epistle. Online Giving is accessible at

StPaulsLutheran.Church/give. There is a minimal fee for each transaction.

Removing Advent Decorations

Holiday decorations will be removed and packed away on Saturday, January 6, 2024, at 9am. If you would like to help, email Bonnie Hinson at lwaynehinson@yahoo.com or call her at 704-279-3126.

Outreach Committee

The meeting originally scheduled for January 8th, has been **rescheduled to meet on Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 2pm.**

Friendship Club

St. Paul's Friendship Club will meet **Thursday**, January 18th, at 10:30am. Bonnie Hinson will present a program—*Rights to Survivorship*. This program is very informative and helpful when dealing with the death of a spouse. Please note that the meeting day for the club has changed back to the **third Thursday** of each month. (Bible study classes have been moved to Tuesdays.)

Community Food and Clothing Shelter at Organ Lutheran Church

Please bring non-perishable food items to the church and place them in the same plastic receptacles we have been using. Our property brothers will make sure it gets over to Organ Lutheran Church where they are meeting the needs of folks who live on this side of the county. Many needy people in East Rowan have a difficult time getting down to Rowan Helping Ministries, so Organ is now meeting the needs of more than 100 families. St. Paul's will help them meet the needs of even more of our neighbors.

If you have clothing to donate, please do not bring it to St. Paul's but carry it straight to the shelter at Organ. It would be wise to call ahead to let them know you will be coming over. The church office number is 704-279-3096.

January Calendar of Events

Sundays

- Sunday School, each week at 9:30am
- Worship Service, each week at 10:30am
- Men's Choir practice, each week at 4pm
- Hand Bell practice, each week at 5pm
- Vespers at the Parsonage—fellowship at 6pm; prayer at 6:30pm
- January 7 –Breakfast before Sunday School, 8:30am
- January 7 – Christian Education Committee, 2pm
- January 7 – Outreach Committee, 2pm
- January 7 – Autumn Care worship service, 2pm
- January 14 – Worship & Music Committee, Parlor at Noon
- January 14 – Kathy Ketchie Circle, 4pm
- January 21 – Autumn Care worship service, 2pm

Mondays

- Faith Academy after-school program, 1–3pm
- January 1 – Church office is closed—Happy New Year!
- January 8 – Grace Ridenhour Circle and Hama Lingle Circle, meet together, 6pm
- January 8 – Melissa Lura Circle, 6pm
- January 15 – Council meeting, 6:30pm
- January 15 – Newsletter articles due
- Lutheran Men's meeting, 6:30pm

Tuesdays

- Bible Study classes, each Tuesday at 10am and 6pm
- Girl Scouts meet each week at 6:45pm beginning January 9th
- January 2 – Extension Club, 1pm
- January 9 – Bonnie Bost Circle, 7pm
- January 16 – Staff meeting, 5pm

Wednesdays

- Homeschool group meets Wednesdays, 8:30–3:30
- Adult Choir practice, Wednesdays, 6:30pm
- Youth Confirmation, 7:30pm beginning January 10
- January 3 – Ellen Bumgarner Circle, 10am

Thursdays

- January 18 – Friendship Club, 10:30am
(Note the change of day; meetings will now be the third *Thursday* of each month.)

Fridays

- January 12 – Girl Scouts sleepover begins at 7pm

Saturdays

- January 13 – Girl Scouts morning events end at 1pm
- January 27 – Girl Scouts meet in the fellowship hall, 10am–1pm

Lutheran Women Circle Meetings

Ellen Bumgarner–Wednesday, January 3, 10am

Kathy Ketchie–Sunday, January 14, 4pm

Grace Ridenhour–Monday, January 8 (E. Innes Blue Bay)

Hama Lingle–Monday, January 8 (E. Innes Blue Bay)

Bonnie Bost–Tuesday, January 9

Melissa Lura–TBA (scheduled for Monday, January 8, 6pm)

Hama Lingle Circle and the **Grace Ridenhour** Circle **will meet together for supper** on Monday, January 8th, at 6pm, at Blue Bay on East Innes Street.

The first **Blood Drive** of 2024 at St. Paul's will be on Monday, **February 12th, from 1:30 – 6pm**. Please contact Alice Davis if you need to make an appointment—pherford704-855-4930.

Memorials

A gift was received in memory of grandparents, Dave and Pearl Honbarger, and parents, Harry and Bobbie Honbarger for the Captial Building Fund from Charles Honbarger.

A gift was received in memory of Frankie Raymer for the Capital Building Fund from Susan and Mark Ryman.

A gift was received in memory of Perry Julian for the Capital Building Fund from Susan and Mark Ryman.

A gift was received in memory of Ann Heilig for the Capital Building Fund from Susan and Mark Ryman.

A gift was received in memory of Lloyd Casper for the Capital Building Fund from Susan and Mark Ryman.

A gift was received in memory of Polly Webb for the Capital Building Fund from Susan and Mark Ryman.

A gift was received in memory of Haynes Shirley for the Capital Building Fund from Ruth Julian.

A gift was received in memory of Chuck Hess for the Capital Building Fund from Ruth Julian.

A gift was received in memory of Wilma Heilig for the Handbell Choir fund from her daughter Delores Stanley.

A gift was received in memory of John and Zada Stafford for the General Fund from Wayne and Johnsie Taylor.

A gift was received in memory of Louise Taylor for the General Fund from Wayne and Johnsie Taylor.

A gift was received in memory of Catherine Allison for the General Fund from Wayne and Johnsie Taylor.

To Honor

A gift was received in honor of Dana Bost for the Carillon Fund from Crystal Bost.

A gift was received in honor of Susan and Pastor Ryman for the Capital Building Fund from Helen Gordon.

A gift was received in honor of Pamela Cottingham for the Capital Building Fund from Helen Gordon.

A gift was received in honor of Alice Davis for the Capital Building Fund from Helen Gordon.

A gift was received in honor of the Property Brothers for the Capital Building Fund from Helen Gordon.

A gift was received in honor of Judi and D.W. Honbarger for the General Fund from Ruth Julian.

A gift was received in honor of Helen Gordon for the Capital Building Fund from Alice Davis.

**And whatever you do,
in word or deed,
do everything in the name
of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to
God the Father through him.**

Colossians 3:17

We Have All Gone Astray

Find the 30 bold words from Isaiah 53:1–6.

L P S Y W D T E T B E W A D J
D O T A D G E H R V Z V N E I
E H R W N S R T G I B M R V D
S E I D A T N I C U S Z S E W
I A C D L N E O E I O E C I W
P L K U X G W D T F L R D L H
S E E L A Y E O F I E F D E R
E D N S T T X M N I C A F B E
D E S U C W D M P J F E L A V
A E A E C N A R A E P P A L E
M E J D S T O O R Y A R T S A
B E I H S O R R O W S Y N R L
R A O A R M N E T T I M S A E
L O M A J E S T Y P E A C E D
T I N I Q U I T Y T Q F R V L

Who has **believed** our **message**? And to whom has the **arm** of the **LORD** been **revealed**? For he grew up before him like a **shoot**, and like a **root** out of a **drought land**. He had no **beauty** or **majesty** that we might **notice** him, no **appearance** that we should **desire** him. He was **despised** and **rejected** of men, a man of **sorrows** and acquainted with **grief**. Like one from whom men hide their face, he was despised, and we did not esteem him. Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him **stricken**, **smitten** by God, and **afflicted**. But he was **pierced** for our evildoing; he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement that brought us **peace** was upon him. And with his wounds we are **healed**. Like sheep we have all gone **astray**. Every one of us has turned to his **own way**. And the LORD has **laid** on him the **iniquity** of us **all**.



St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)

OUR MISSION

A family of faith sharing the gospel and love of Christ

Phone: 704-633-0922

Email: secretary@stpaulslutheran.church

Website: StPaulsLutheran.Church

Facebook: www.facebook.com/StPaulsLCMC

OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Friday 8:30 a.m. – 12 Noon

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St. Paul's newsletter, the "Monthly Epistle," is intended to keep everyone informed about happenings within the congregation that effect and contribute to our ministry together. In order to maximize reach and minimize cost, the preferred methods of distribution are by email, and posting on our St. Paul's website (www.StPaulsLutheran.Church). All members are encouraged to use the newsletter as a resource to help you consider how God is calling you to be involved in the life of his church. If you are unable to access the newsletter online, or would just like to have a printed copy to refer to, the most cost-effective way to receive it is to pick up a copy from the narthex or church office. We mail copies to those members whom we know don't have online access, are shut-in, or live out of town. If you want to be added to our mailing or email list, please contact the church office.