

January 11, 2021

Dear St. Paul Church Family and Friends,

Greetings to you from part of the leadership team of St. Paul Church! This past Sunday in worship, we celebrated the Baptism of Christ. We also meditated on what it means to be a baptized Child of God.

Pastor Becky rewrote this past Sunday's sermon on Saturday afternoon in response to the national upheaval we are experiencing. A copy of that sermon is included in this packet.

We are very aware that the weekly worship packets have not been arriving on time. We have been told that this is due to Covid19 infections at mail processing facilities. You can access the weekly bulletin on the St. Paul webpage: [www.stpaulnb.org](http://www.stpaulnb.org).

At this point, we are scheduled to return to in-person worship on January 24. However, this is a moving target due to increased coronavirus cases. Church Council meets tonight to discuss this issue. We will communicate to you decisions made moving forward.

You will notice in the financials that we are approximately \$5300 in the red for 2020. Keep in mind that around \$3000 of that was brought into 2020 from 2019. This means that we were only \$2300 behind in giving versus expenses—not bad for a pandemic year! We thank you for your generosity and encourage you to continue to support the many ministries and missions of St. Paul Church in this new year.

Our Church Council slate for 2021 is not yet complete. We still need a Treasurer, a Junior Deacon, and a First Year Trustee. If you feel called to any of these positions, please call the church office, Roland Dicke or Myra Hanenkratt.

We are seeking a volunteer with snow removal equipment who would be available for snow removal on weekdays on the west side of our property and on weekends for our parking lots. Please contact Roland Dicke or Myra Hanenkratt if you are interested.

Thank you for your faithfulness to St. Paul Church!

Grace and Peace,

*Roland Dicke*   *Myra Hanenkratt*   *Becky Erb*   *Dee Schroer*

Roland Dicke   Myra Hanenkratt   Becky Erb   Strang Dee Schroer  
Council President   Council VP   Senior Pastor   Associate Pastor  
Financial Information as of December 31, 2020

**Operating Fund**

**Beg. Balance (\$2,974.14)**

Endowment Transfers \$37,942.92(ytd)

Income \$312,218.40(YTD)

Expenses \$314,539.29(YTD)

Balance **(\$5,295.03)**

**Building Maint & Property Care**

Beg. Balance \$83,428.04

Income \$17,359.00 (YTD)

Endowment Income \$4,304.33 (YTD)

Expenses \$34,159.78(YTD)

Balance \$70,931.59

**Local Aid**

Beg. Balance \$9,934.05

Income \$19,348.00(YTD)

Expenses \$23,226.89(YTD)

Balance \$6,055.16

Bless Pantry Inc. \$20,716.16

Bless Pantry Ex. \$12,835.01

Balance \$7,881.15

**Our Church Wider Mission**

Pledge \$30,000.00

Income \$24,767.00 (YTD)

**Project of the Year**

Balance \$2,548.00

2020 Year End is not completed, all ending balances are preliminary

Financial Information as of January 11, 2021 is 2021 only, with no past years' balances included.

Financial Information as of January 11, 2021(2021 #'s ONLY)

**Operating Fund**

Giving Income \$4,465.00(ytd)

Endowment Transfers \$831.00(ytd)

Income \$5,296.00(ytd)

Expenses \$8,355.24(ytd)

Balance **(\$3,059.24)** (ytd)

**Building Maint & Property Care**

Income \$210.00 (ytd)

Endowment Income \$0.00(ytd)

Expenses \$0.00(ytd)

Balance \$210.00(ytd)

**Local Aid**

Income \$940.00(ytd)

Expenses \$90.10(ytd)

Balance \$849.90

Bless Pantry Inc. \$2,660.00(ytd)

Bless Pantry Ex. \$176.95(ytd)

Balance \$2,483.05

**Our Church Wider Mission**

Pledge \$25,000.00

Income \$450.00(weekly)

Income \$450.00 (ytd)

**Project of the Year**

Income \$25.00(ytd)

Balance \$25.00(ytd)

JANUARY 17, 2021  
SECOND SUNDAY  
AFTER EPIPHANY



*God reaches out to us.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	John 1:43-51	Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael
Monday	1 Samuel 3:1-20	The call of Samuel
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Honor God in body and spirit
Wednesday	Psalms 40:1-11	Happy are those who trust in God
Thursday	Romans 8:26-30	God reaches out to us
Friday	2 Thessalonians 2:13-17	Be faithful
Saturday	Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18	The Lord knows us well
Sunday	Mark 1:14-20	Jesus calls the first disciples

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."*  
1 Samuel 3:10 (NRSV)

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Awesome God, for your desire to have a relationship with us through Christ our Lord, we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

For the food that we eat, for your love that we meet, for this meal that we share as a sign of your care. Amen.

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the God that searches you and knows you give you hope and peace through Christ our Lord. (Psalm 139:1)



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JANUARY 17, 2021

### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Listen, God Is Calling*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Are you more of a listener or a talker? Explain.
- Is it easy for you to tell others about Jesus? Why or why not?
- As a disciple of Jesus, why is listening to God so important?

### DEVOTIONS

*Read:* 1 Samuel 3:1-20.

Human efforts are important for lots of things in this world, but in the Bible, it is God's efforts that make all the difference. It is not first that we as humans call on God to make God a saving presence in our lives. It is God that reaches out to us. We see this in the story of Jesus calling disciples (John 1:43-51). Jesus takes the initiative with Philip, Nathanael, and with us. We see that same pattern when God calls Samuel. God repeatedly reaches out to a boy who does not know God yet. This is also the theme of Psalm 139:1: "O LORD, you have searched me and known me." According to the psalmist, that is unbelievably awesome news. That news is worthy of our full attention, like the boy Samuel saying to the LORD, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10). With a God who comes to us, knows us, and calls us to do God's work in the world, it is worth taking the voice of Samuel and making it our own: "Speak, Lord, for I am listening." The church, body of Christ, wants to acknowledge that we are listening to Jesus; the faithfulness of each disciple of Jesus says, "Lord, I am listening to you." How do you listen to God? Is it through prayer, reading the Bible, public worship, or listening to the voice of God through others around you? Explain.

*Pray:* **Dear God, just as you pursued Samuel and the disciples Philip and Nathanael, we thank you for pursuing us with your love and grace today through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### SERVICE

To care for someone is to listen to them as Samuel listened to God when God called out to him. Is there someone who could use your attentive listening this week?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Psalm 139 is a beautiful and reflective psalm. Read Psalm 139:1-6 this week using a meditative tradition called *Lectio Divina*. Read it once slowly and pause for reflection. Read it again and pick out a word or phrase that stands out for you. Pause, then read it one last time and wonder how the verses can guide your life this week. Conclude by praying the Lord's Prayer.



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)



2000 year old Nazareth Synagogue  
Photo by Rev. Becky Erb Strang

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Visit our website at <https://stpaulnb.org>

Like and follow our page St. Paul United Church of Christ – New

Bremen, Ohio on Facebook

Rev. Becky Senior Pastor

Pastor Dee Associate Pastor

Roland Dicke-Council President

**Welcome to St. Paul UCC, we are glad you are here!!**

Blessing and greetings to one and all. In the name of Christ, you are welcome today and every day.

**January 17, 2021**

**Second Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leaders**

Ministers

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Pastor Dee Schroer

Cheyenne Olt

Dick Hudson

The Congregation

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Accompanist/Vocalist

Organist

PRELUDE

GREETING AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES: As we light the altar and Christ candle, you are invited to light a candle or candles at home in preparation for worship.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# WELCOME SONG

## No Matter

### No Matter

*♩=120*

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has the lyrics 'No mat-ter who, no mat-ter what no mat-ter where you are on the' and chords F, Dm, Gm7, C, F, F7. The second staff has 'jour-ney of life; you're wel-come, wel-come in this place. No mat-ter' and chords Bb, G7, F, Dm, G7, Gm7, C7. The third staff has 'who, no mat-ter what, no mat-ter where you are on the' and chords F, Dm, Gm7, C, F, F7. The fourth staff has 'jour-ney of life: ac-cept-ed, wel-comed by God's grace. grace.' and chords Bb, G7, F, Dm, Gm7, C7, C, F, F. There are also directions 'To verses' and 'Last time, Fine' above the final notes.

No mat-ter who, no mat-ter what no mat-ter where you are on the  
jour-ney of life; you're wel-come, wel-come in this place. No mat-ter  
who, no mat-ter what, no mat-ter where you are on the  
jour-ney of life: ac-cept-ed, wel-comed by God's grace. grace.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.

**People:** There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.

**Leader:** There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us for our particular service.

**People:** The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

**Leader:** Christ is like a single body, which has many parts.

**People:** It is still one body even though it is made up of different parts.

**Leader:** If one part of the body suffers, all other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.

**People:** All of us are Christ's body, and each one is part of it.



## Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee 59

G  $\frac{G}{D}$  D7  $\frac{G}{D}$   $\frac{D}{C}$   $\frac{G}{B}$   $\frac{D7}{A}$  G  $\frac{G}{D}$  D

1 Joy - ful, joy - ful, we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love;  
 2 All thy works with joy sur-round thee, earth and heaven re - flect thy rays,  
 3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blest,  
 4 Mor - tals, join the hap - py cho - rus which the morn - ing stars be - gan;

G  $\frac{C}{G}$  G7 C<sub>2</sub>  $\frac{Am}{C}$   $\frac{G}{C}$   $\frac{Am}{C}$   $\frac{G}{D}$  D7  $\frac{G}{D}$  D7 G

hearts un - fold like flowers be - fore thee, open - ing to the sun a - bove.  
 stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.  
 well-spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean depth of hap - py rest!  
 love di - vine is reign - ing o'er us, join - ing all with - in its span.

D  $\frac{G}{D}$  D7  $\frac{G}{D}$  D7  $\frac{B}{D\#}$  B7 Em A7 D

Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the dark of doubt a - way;  
 Field and for - est, vale and moun - tain, flow - ery mead - ow, flash - ing sea,  
 Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our Broth - er— all who live in love are thine;  
 Ev - er sing - ing, march we on - ward, vic - tors in the midst of strife;

G  $\frac{C}{G}$  G7 C<sub>2</sub>  $\frac{Am}{C}$   $\frac{G}{C}$   $\frac{Am}{C}$   $\frac{G}{D}$  D7 G D7 G

giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day!  
 chant - ing bird and flow - ing foun - tain call us to re - joice in thee.  
 teach us how to love each oth - er, lift us to the joy di - vine.  
 joy - ful mu - sic leads us sun - ward in the tri - umph song of life.

## INVOCATION (unison)

**Eternal God, we come to you with hungry hearts, waiting to be filled: waiting to be filled with a sense of your presence; waiting to be filled with the touch of your Spirit; waiting to be filled with new energy for service. Come to us, we pray. Be with us. Touch us. Empower us as your people that we might worship you here and act in the world for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

## \*HALLELUJAH!

Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jahl  
Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jahl  
Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jahl Hal - le -  
lu - jahl Hal - le - lu - jahl

## CHILDREN'S MOMENT:

I brought my cell phone with me today to use its camera. In Genesis we hear that God created humans in his image. But what does this mean? If I were to take a picture of you, is that picture actually YOU? No, it is a picture of you, but not actually you. Just as we are created in God's image, like this photo, we are still not God himself. We are not God, but we reflect what God is like.

And what is God like? Loving. Forgiving. Merciful. Faithful.  
Created in the image of God, we are called to be the same.

# Follow You, My Jesus

From *The Inn of God's Forgiveness and Other Hymns for the Progressive Church*

Adam Brooks Webber

adambrookswerber.com

C<sup>5</sup> Gm Fm G Fm Cm G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>5</sup>

I will fol - low in your way, fol - low you, fol - low you.  
 Feed the hun - gry, help the\_ poor, fol - low you, fol - low you.  
 I will love my e - ne - my, fol - low you, fol - low you.  
 Serve in all hu - mi - li - ty, fol - low you, fol - low you.  
 Give my heart to God a - bove, fol - low you, fol - low you.

C<sup>5</sup> G Eb F G Ab Bb C(sus4) Cm

Dai - ly work and dai - ly\_ pray, fol - low you, my Je - sus.  
 Wel - come strang - ers to my\_ door, fol - low you, my Je - sus.  
 Pray for those who in - jure\_ me, fol - low you, my Je - sus.  
 Shine my light for all to - see, fol - low you, my Je - sus.  
 As my - self, my neigh bor\_ love, fol - low you, my Je - sus.

Cm Ab Bb Cm Fm Cm G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>5</sup>

I will fol - low you, fol - low you, what - ev - er comes.

Cm Ab Bb C Fm Cm Bb(add9) C<sup>5</sup>

Help me Je - sus, fol - low you, fol - low you, my\_ Je - sus.



## PASTORAL JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

**Joys:** Christ's Epiphany Light!

**Concerns:** We are continuing to pray for Drew Wray, Deb Lear, Jan Dammeyer, and Pastor Dee Schroer.

## PASTORAL PRAYER, SILENT PRAYER, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

You have shown us, O God, what is good and what is blessed: the poor, those who mourn, the meek, those who seek righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted. You require of us that we do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you. For this legacy of right action based in faith, we offer to you our thanks and praise. Help us, we pray, to remember that your blessings come to us now and are a part of your self-giving love.

Holy God, you have shown us what is good and what is blessed, yet we behave as if we have seen neither goodness nor blessedness. We know we must reach out to those at the margins of life—the poor, the meek, those who mourn, yet when the rubber meets the road, we fail to be instruments of your hope to others. Forgive us for our blindness, we pray. Forgive us for failing to see the glaring needs of those who surround us. Forgive us for our lack of kindness and humility. Help us to be better people as we seek to share your kingdom with others.

Today, we lift up to you those who are poor and poor in spirit. May our acts of justice and your compassion transform their lives.

Today we pray for those who mourn, those who grieve great loss, those who are feeling lost and alone. May we be a gentle presence and light in their darkness.

Today we lift up to you those who are humble and meek and merciful. May they serve as models for our own Christian journey.

We pray for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness—that their passion for justice might be the gift they give this world.

Our prayers surround those who are pure in heart and those who are peacemakers. May they serve as beacons of hope.

Gentle God, we pray for those who know persecution—religious persecution, political persecution, economic persecution, and personal persecution. May our prayers surround them and offer them strength.

Today we also pray for those within our family of faith who are sick, those who are recuperating, and those who need your healing touch.

Loving God, hear us now as we lift up to you our prayers. SILENCE

Gracious God, we thank you for hearing our prayers and for loving us unconditionally. All of this we pray with the prayer your son taught us praying...**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Psalm 146

(The Message)

*Hallelujah!*

*O my soul, praise God!*

*All my life long I'll praise God,  
singing songs to my God as long as I live.*

<sup>3-9</sup> *Don't put your life in the hands of experts  
who know nothing of life, of salvation life.*

*Mere humans don't have what it takes;  
when they die, their projects die with them.*

*Instead, get help from the God of Jacob,  
put your hope in God and know real blessing!*

*God made sky and soil,  
sea and all the fish in it.*

*He always does what he says—  
he defends the wronged,  
he feeds the hungry.*

*God frees prisoners—  
he gives sight to the blind,  
he lifts up the fallen.*

*God loves good people, protects strangers,  
takes the side of orphans and widows,  
but makes short work of the wicked.*

<sup>10</sup> *God's in charge—always.*

*Zion's God is God for good!*

*Hallelujah!*

*Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*

*<sup>16</sup> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,*

*<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

*<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” <sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” <sup>24</sup> And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.*

## RESPONSE

Leader: The word of God for the people of God!

**People: God is still speaking! Thanks be to God!**

## SERMON

*Isn't This Joseph's Son???*

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Twice I've been to Israel over the years and twice I have visited the synagogue where Jesus worshiped and read from the scroll of Isaiah soon after he had returned from the 40 days of temptation by Satan in the wilderness.

Jesus had returned home at the start of his public ministry. Perhaps he thought he should begin by ministering to, preaching to, offering salvation to his closest family and friends—his hometown first.

What startled me about the 2000-year-old synagogue we entered in Nazareth was its size—so incredibly small compared to my imagination of Jesus reading and proclaiming who he is to a large crowd of worshipers. Instead, the ancient synagogue—which has since been converted to a place for Christians to worship—is not much bigger than our church library.

The tiny size of this synagogue tells me one of three things:

1. That the Jewish population in Nazareth was small in Jesus' day
2. Or perhaps there was more than one synagogue in Nazareth
3. Or that Nazareth itself in Jesus' day was a tiny village.

We do not have the answers for any of these musings, but we do have that tiny synagogue in which Jesus declared who he is—not just for the Jews, but for all of humankind.

According to scholars, today's reading from Luke sets the stage for the rest of Luke and Acts combined—describing in clear detail exactly how Jesus' mission and ministry on earth were to unfold.

In the reading, Jesus is worshiping at his hometown synagogue. He gets up to read the scroll from the prophet Isaiah—the first two verses of Isaiah 61, in fact. Let's hear them again: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of*

*sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,  
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Interestingly, the word "release" in this passage, translated from the Greek, is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It speaks not of release from prison, but release from all forms of bondage—economic (the poor), physical (the lame and blind) and political (the condemned). Translated this way, release is less about freeing people from literal chains than it is about forgiveness on all levels.

After reading this short passage, Jesus sat back down and said to his fellow worshipers, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." At first, we find that his family and friends were amazed by Jesus' message. That they, for even a brief moment, believed that he was the One anointed by God's Holy Spirit to bring good news to the poor, the forgotten, the captives, the oppressed.

In awe, the people said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" This simple statement is fraught with irony. Can you believe, said his neighbors, that Joseph's son would become a prophet, the Messiah, the Anointed One? OR they could have been saying, "We've seen this kid since he was itty bitty. There is no way he is God's anointed." And then the irony: The Gospel of Luke takes pains in the early chapters to point out that Jesus is NOT Joseph's son, BUT God's Son.

But Jesus had more to say to his hometown folk—regardless of their feelings about the hometown boy turned Messiah. He went on to say that rarely do hometowns welcome the message of their own prophets, describing how prophets Elijah and Elisha both were rejected by the Hebrews in their times, only to be accepted by foreigners.

NOW HE DID IT! What began as praise from the worshipers of Jesus turned into anger. Their hometown boy just told them that God's Good News is for more than Jews—that the message of love and acceptance and grace is for EVERYONE.

Incensed, the people left worship that day—filled with rage—chasing Jesus into the streets of town and up a hill where they planned to throw him off a cliff. Yet somehow, Jesus was able to get away and get on with his message of hope and salvation for everyone.

So, what does this passage have to say to us as we move through the Epiphany Season? Epiphany—the story of the coming of the Magi—



foreigners—to worship Jesus is given greater significance in today's reading. While the shepherds who visited Jesus were presumably Jewish, we know from the reading in Matthew of the Magi at Epiphany that the Wise Ones were not Jewish.

Today's reading reminds us again that Jesus' good news is for everyone—that all are set free from whatever it is that binds us because of God's love. As worshipers in this place and time, we would be wise to heed this story. Jesus' radical inclusivity is greater than any human construct. His reading and interpretation of scripture is wider and more welcoming than we can imagine.

For here is the deal: God's grace is never subject to the limitations and boundaries of any nation, church, group or race. Those who would exclude others instead exclude themselves from grace. We children of God are called to be instruments of God's grace for others, but we are never free to set limits on who may receive that grace.

Throughout history, the gospel has always been more radically inclusive than any group, denomination or church. As a result, we who call ourselves Christians continually struggle for the breadth of love and acceptance that more closely mirrors God's love. The paradox of the gospel, the good news, is that the unlimited grace that it offers so scandalizes us that we are unable to receive it. Jesus could not do more for his hometown because they were not open to his radical message.

So I ask you: How much **more** might God be able to do with us if we were ready to transcend the boundaries we have set on love and grace and truly open our hearts and lives to all of God's children? How might God be speaking to us in this place and time to be more welcoming, inclusive and loving?

Quaker theologian Parker Palmer has this to say about how we are to live as followers of Jesus: "The mission of the church is not to enlarge its membership, not to bring outsiders to accept its terms, but simply to love the world in every possible way - to love the world as God did and does....If we are able to love the world, that will be the best demonstration of the truth which the church has been given."

Back to the synagogue in Nazareth. It's true: I was startled by the small size of the worship space, but perhaps that is the point. Religious systems try to limit God's message by building physical and spiritual walls

defining who is welcome and who is not. When Jesus read from the scroll in that tiny synagogue on that fateful day 2000 years ago, he burst open the walls—reminding the worshipers that God’s love, God’s grace, cannot be confined to one group of people, one interpretation of scripture. It became Jesus’ lifelong ministry to demonstrate that radical love, that inclusive welcome, that grace beyond all imagination.

Let us go and do likewise. Amen.

ANTHEM *Room at the Table* Carrie Newcomer  
(YouTube search: Carrie Newcomer *Room at the Table*)

*Let our hearts not be hardened to those living on the margins  
There is room at the table for everyone.  
This is where it all begins, this is how we gather in:  
There is room at the table for everyone.*

*Too long we have wandered burdened and undone  
But there is room at the table for everyone.  
This is how it all begins, let us sing a new world in:  
There is room at the table for everyone.*

*Chorus:  
There is room for us all  
And no gift is too small  
There is room at the table for everyone.  
There’s enough if we share  
Come on pull up a chair  
There is room at the table for everyone.*

*No matter who you are no matter where you’re from  
There is room at the table for everyone.  
Here and now we can be the beloved community  
There is room at the table for everyone. (Chorus)*

*Chorus:  
There is room for us all*

*And no gift is too small  
There is room at the table for everyone.  
There's enough if we share  
Come on pull up a chair  
There is room at the table for everyone.*

*Let our hearts not be hardened to those living on the margins  
There is room at the table for everyone.  
Room at the table for everyone.  
Room at the table for everyone  
Room at the table for everyone  
Room at the table for everyone*

## OFFERING OUR GIFTS AND TITHES

### OFFERING SENTENCES:

“Consider the lilies...look at the birds of the air”: Jesus pulls our attention away from our worries about scarcity, and turns our gaze toward the beautiful gifts of God’s creation, signs of abundance and grace surrounding us always. Trust may be difficult for us, as it was for those early disciples, yet we bring our gifts with the assurance of God’s care for us every day of our lives. Let us give our very best to the Lord, our God.

### DOXOLOGY

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

### PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

**God, we present these offerings that they may be used to extend your liberating reign. With them, we offer our varied ministries in the days ahead that each of us may be part of your answer to the cries of the world. Amen.**

John 8:12

Jim Strathdee, 1969; rev. 1981

In response to a Christmas poem by Howard Thurman

F Unison Introduction

Refrain

B $\flat$  C F

"I am the light of the world!"

B $\flat$  C F G $\flat$  D $\flat$  C

You peo-ple come and fol-low me!"

If you fol-low and love you'll

F G $\flat$ 7 C B $\flat$  F B $\flat$  F

Last time, end

learn the mys-ter-y of what you were meant to do and be.

F B $\flat$ /D C F

- |   |          |               |                        |          |          |
|---|----------|---------------|------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1 | When the | song of the   | an-gels is             | stilled, | when the |
| 2 | 7        | To find       | the lost and lone-ly   | one,     | 7 to     |
| 3 | 7        | To free       | the pris-oner from all | chains,  | 7 to     |
| 4 | 7        | To bring hope | to ev-ery task you     | do,      | 7 to     |

This text is based on a Christmas poem by Howard Thurman, a prolific twentieth-century writer, theologian, and teacher. The song grew out of Jim Strathdee's music ministry at an intercultural, bilingual congregation in Los Angeles.

Tune: LIGHT OF THE WORLD Irr.  
Jim Strathdee, 1969

Gm Dm C  
 star in the sky is gone, When the  
 heal the bro - ken soul with love, 7 To  
 make the pow - er - ful care, To re -  
 dance at a ba - by's new birth, 7 To

F B♭ C F  
 sag - es and the shep - herds have found their way home, the  
 feed the hun - gry chil - dren with warmth and good food, To  
 build the na - tions with strength of good will, to  
 make mu - sic in . . . an old per - son's heart, and

Dm B♭ Gm7 C *Return to*
  
 work of Christ-mas is be - gun:  
 feel the earth be - low, the sky a - bove!  
 see all God's chil - dren ev - ery - where!  
 sing to the col - ors of the earth!

**BENEDICTION:** You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine that others may see the good things you do and glorify God. God is with us now and always, go in peace.



## \*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

## *Pass the Love*

### Pass the Love

Musical score for "Pass the Love" in 4/4 time, tempo J=95. The score consists of four staves of music with lyrics and chords. The chords are: F, Gm7, F, Gm7, F/A, F/Bb, Gm9, C7, F, Gm7, F, Gm7, F/A, F/Bb, Gm9, G7, C, Fmaj7, Dm, F/G, F/C, Am7, Dm7, Gm7, F/C, C7, F.

Love our God, ev - 'ry day, praise with joy go - ing on your way.  
Pass it on, t'all you meet, ev - 'ry day in — ev - 'ry way.  
Love our Ho - ly God. Pray with hope each day.  
Bless the Ho - ly Name. Praise our — God.

## PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

## POSTLUDE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Altar Flowers** are given in memory of Loved Ones by Alice Hartwig.

**Attendance**-Online-Daily Devotions Avg.-110,  
January 3-Sunday Worship-354, Sunday School-133,  
January 6-Confirmation-12, Leaders-4, Youth Group-4, Leaders-3

**Daily Devotions**-Please join Rev Becky or Pastor Dee Monday-Friday at 11:30am, online via Facebook Live. These will air on our Facebook page St. Paul United Church of Christ-New Bremen, OH.

**Zoom Bible Study**-join us Thursday's at 6:30pm. Join Zoom Meeting by clicking on or logging onto:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88640093949?pwd=ZllqSDBpZzdzZi9LT0d6SThwblItZz09> **Meeting ID: 886 4009 3949** **Passcode: 344973**

\*If you would like an email version of this to make logging on easier, simply email Pastor Becky: [berbstrang@stpaulnb.org](mailto:berbstrang@stpaulnb.org)

**January Book Club-**All are welcome to join St. Paul Church's January Book Club set for Sunday, January 24 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. We will discuss Gail Tsukiyama's book *Women of the Silk*. Copies of the book can be picked up at the church office or you can contact the church office if you need a copy sent or delivered to you. All are welcome. Zoom information: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89039130630?pwd=akg3STIJbXRFWE9CSXE5M3hjZXBrUT09> **Meeting ID: 890 3913 0630 Passcode: 744081**

\*If you would like an email version of this to make logging on easier, simply email Pastor Becky: [berbstrang@stpaulnb.org](mailto:berbstrang@stpaulnb.org)

**Sunday January 17-Sunday School** will be via Facebook Live beginning at 9:00am. **Worship**-will be via Facebook Live at 10:15am. **Sunday January 24 and 31-Sunday School** will be in person and via Facebook Live at 9:00am. **Worship** will be in person and via Facebook Live at 10:15am. **As of this printing.**

**Bulletin Availability-weekly bulletins** are available for download on our website [stpaulnb.org](http://stpaulnb.org). Just click the yellow **BULLETINS** box in the upper right hand corner.

**2021 Altar Flower Chart** has been posted in the Narthex. To sign up for the date(s) you would like. Please call the church office Monday-Friday to sign up. Thank you. **January dates still open the 24<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>.** Open dates the rest of the year **February 7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, March 7<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, April 4<sup>th</sup>, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, June 27<sup>th</sup>, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, October 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, November 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, December 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**Women's Service Group-**The Women's Service Group is planning to send fifty school kit bags to Church World Service this coming summer. The supplies for the bags are all purchased but what is needed is persons willing to help sew the school bags. Material and directions on how to sew them is available. If interested, please contact Joyce Gilberg for more information.

**Mailbox**-There is a mailbox outside of the East Educational Building door for any correspondence you may have for the church and would like to drop off. Please lift the flap and drop through the slot on the top. The box is locked and will be checked often. Thank you!

### **Project of the Year and January Monthly Mission-Blessing Pantry**

A number of years ago, a decision was made to alternate the Project of the Year between a St. Paul facility project and a broader church mission project, chosen by the Mission Team. 2021 is the year for the broader mission project. We, the Mission Team, with Council's approval have chosen the Blessing Pantry because it serves many from the surrounding area who do not belong to St. Paul. We see long lines for food on our TV's every day, well, believe it or not, we have the same needs here in New Bremen and surrounding area as in other places. January will kick off this important project to help with the very real needs of area families. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, families utilize the pantry for food and other daily necessities regularly. St. Paul has partnered with West Ohio Food Bank, which allows us to purchase food for as little as .19 cents a pound and this gives us greater purchasing capability to keep the shelves stocked. We are asking members of St. Paul for donations of money as well as items for the Blessing Pantry. We, the Mission Team, will keep you updated on how we are doing throughout the year. Thank all of you for your generosity to the missions of St. Paul. **God Loves a Cheerful Giver!**  
The Mission Team

**Blessing Pantry**-is located in the North Hallway and accessible by the North door during these hours - **Tuesdays 5:30pm-7:30pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays 1:00pm-3:00pm.** The Pantry will be closed Mondays and Fridays. **All Donations Welcome – Blessing Pantry Needs-Paper Plates, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Kleenex, Napkins, Laundry Detergent, Dish Soap, Razors, Shaving Cream, Deodorant, Diapers (size 6), Baby Wipes, Diaper Cream, Vaseline, Bandages, Shampoo, Hand/Body Soap, Hand/Body Lotion, Tampons & Panty Liners, Cleaning Supplies, Storage Bags, Garbage Bags and Pet Food. Thank you!** There is a container outside the East and North Educational Building doors for donations.

**January/February Upper Rooms**-have arrived! They are available at the East entrance to the education building. Or please call the church office if you would like one and we will gladly mail one to you.

**E-Giving @ St. Paul**  
**3 Different Ways to Give**

**Online** – Make a donation on our website: [stpaulnb.org](http://stpaulnb.org)

**Give+ App** – Search “Give Plus Church” in your App store and find St. Paul to Get Started!

**Text** – Make a donation to our Number: 833-308-0048  
St. Paul New “Text to Give” #(# changed as of 10/9/19)

**How To Give by Text (Example - my amount for the example is \$25 (minimum amount is \$5.00))**

- For general fund giving: Send 25 space gl (hit send)
- For building & property fund giving: Send 25 space bp (hit send)
  - For Blessing Pantry: Send 25 space pantry (hit send)
- For project of the year giving: Send 25 space poy (hit send)

**Once a text amount is sent:**

**Registration Link-** Sent via text the first time a donation is made.

Thank you! Please visit (link) to register.

**Donation Confirm-** Sent via text each time a donation is made.

Thank you for donating \$ (amount)! Text repeat to make this recurring or refund to cancel this donation.

**Blood Drive-New Bremen American Legion Hall**

6458 State Route 66, New Bremen

**Monday, February 1 12:00pm-6:00pm**

Please call 1-800-733-2767 or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) and enter: amlegnb to schedule an appointment.



Scan to be directed to  
RapidPass®



Scan to schedule  
an appointment.

Special offer from our partners at Amazon: To thank you for coming to give Feb. 1-28, we'll send you a \$5 Amazon.com Gift Card by email. Restrictions apply, see [amazon.com/gc-legal](http://amazon.com/gc-legal). Terms and conditions apply; visit [rcblood.org/together](http://rcblood.org/together)

### **Baptism of Christ Sermon and Prayer**

**Friends, this has been a most difficult week for all Americans. We have had more daily deaths due to the coronavirus than any other time. Our hospitals are beyond capacity and are unable to keep up. AND, on Wednesday, the day when Christians throughout the world celebrate Epiphany, our nation's Capital was swarmed by angry citizens intent on causing damage and death. Five people died on the day we celebrate the Magi bringing gifts to Baby Jesus.**

**As we prepare to pray together, I ask this question: in this pivotal time in history, what gifts can we offer to one another, our community, our nation, our world—and to Jesus himself?**

**Today's prayer is one written by our Heartland Conference Minister, the Rev. David Long-Higgins on Thursday morning after the horrors of Wednesday. Let us pray.**

Pastoral Prayer, Silent Prayer

Anchor us O God, for there is a morning after all that diminishes or destroys or seeks to dismantle or deny the truth of Your creative Love. SILENCE

Let all force of destruction Be met by Your grounded grace  
Able to grow the impossible When death seeks to win the day. SILENCE

Plant the heart and mind Of Christ Jesus deep within The soil of our souls Anxious and fearful Yet ready for resurrections. Impossible to imagine on our own But by Your grace grown. SILENCE

Form in us a new vision Of what is possible When we search for You In the heart of the other As the starting place of love. SILENCE

Let this be the opening Through which Life rises Revealing the same creative Spirit Which was at work in Christ Jesus. SILENCE

Yes, O God, Work your wonder of resurrection Moment by moment And hour by hour Into this day after And every day after. SILENCE

Form Your creation ever anew Again and again and again

For as long as it takes For our little souls to consent To Your Soul force, always large in Love, Able to make all things new.

### **Sermon**

Today is Baptism of Christ Sunday—the Sunday we celebrate the baptism of Christ Jesus and the gift of our own baptisms. Often on this Sunday, pastors and priests lead the congregation in a renewal of baptism ceremony. When my mom was serving as a pastor in local congregations, she would walk down the center aisle of the sanctuary flinging water upon the worshipers as a reminder that we beloved and baptized children of God. Always and forever.

If ever Christians in our nation needed a renewal of our baptisms, it is now. On Wednesday, we watched in horror as fellow citizens dressed in Camp Auschwitz shirts, carrying American flags, Nazi flags and Confederate flags stormed our nation's capitol, OUR CAPITOL, ransacking, defecating and desecrating the very heart of our democracy. Some of these people even wore shirts that said: 6MWE—shorthand for Six Million Wasn't Enough. To translate further: the death of six million Jews during the Holocaust wasn't enough.

Today's sermon is not meant to polarize us politically. In this last presidential election, a fair and free election, some of us voted for the Republican candidate and some of us voted for the Democratic candidate. When the votes were tallied, certified and ratified, there was one clear winner.

Today's sermon will not rehash the politics of our nation. Instead, I will share with you what I believe it means to be a Jesus Follower in these troubled times. I will share with you what I believe it means to be baptized in Christ when death is knocking (No! Banging!) on our doorsteps.

Baptism itself can be a hot-button issue among Christians. In our own United Church of Christ tradition, we baptize babies, we baptize children, and we baptize adults who were not baptized when they were younger. We baptize with water and the Holy Spirit—water placed on a forehead and a prayer for the Holy Spirit to be upon these beloved children of God.

Other denominations do believer baptisms: baptisms typically around confirmation age (though sometimes younger and sometimes older) when a young adult is ready to say YES to Jesus. These baptisms usually happen by immersion—the new Christian being dunked all the way under the water that they might die to their old life and rise to their new life in Christ.



If truth were told, there is much, much more scriptural evidence for baptism by immersion than baptism by sprinkling. In some of the earliest years of Christianity, new believers were baptized at Easter's dawn before the Easter Sunday worship. Included in this baptism was:

1. Immersion: dying to old and rising to Christ
2. Anointing with oil upon the forehead as the new Christian is now part of the priesthood of believers.
3. Honey upon the lips as a reminder that now that they are baptized Christians, they have entered the Promised Land.

Somehow in the centuries since those earliest of days, we have lost some of baptism's symbolism and meaning. Today, on Baptism of Christ Sunday, it is time (past time!) reclaim the meaning of our baptisms.

First, the baptism itself. Dying to the old and rising to the new. In sign language, the sign for baptism is this. Whether you were baptized as an infant or baptized as an adult, is not what matters. What matters is that now, **this day**, you are a new person in Jesus. So I ask you, if you were to be baptized today, what in your life would you like to let die? What needs to be tossed into the water? What do you need to let go of in order to be a bearer of Christ's light in this world filled with darkness and shadows?

Similarly, if you were to be baptized today as new Christians were centuries ago, you would also be anointed for service with oil. Just yesterday, I took part in a Zoom meeting with the Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza who is a local church pastor and church growth consultant. Over and over again, he stressed that clergy are **not** the ministers of the church—that the ministers are all of you: living out your Christian callings within our congregation, within our community, within our nation and within our world.

Michael also had a helpful image. He said we need to toss out our bibs—that expectation that others will serve us--and put on our aprons: a symbol of serving others. In the churches Rev. Piazza has served, new members are given aprons with the church's mission written upon it—as a reminder to these new folk that membership is about servanthood rather than consumerism.

So I ask you: in what ways can you serve others during this pandemic, during this time of political upheaval? Russian Orthodox priest Anthony Sourozh once wrote, “We should try to live in such a way that if the gospels were lost, they could be rewritten by looking at us.”

That is what it means to be a Christian.

And finally, if you were to be baptized today as in the days of old, honey would be placed on your lips—for you have entered the Promised Land, you have entered the Kingdom of Heaven. Each and every week in worship we pray the Lord's Prayer which includes these words: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Friends, as baptized believers, as Jesus followers, we cannot, **we must not**, be people of destruction and hatred and anger. We need to be Kingdom builders—seeking to create heaven on earth, especially for the many in our land who know very little heaven. This is our sacred calling today and every day.

This week our nation witnessed as extremists—many of whom claim to be Christian—sought to kill our leaders and sow chaos. We cannot let a moment like this pass without reflection of our own complicity in these actions. Are we filled with bitterness or joy? Do we radiate anger or love? Do we seek division or peace?

In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King wrote this: So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?

Friends, the choice is yours to make. Will you live fully into your baptism—dying to the old, rising to the new OR will you reject your baptism, reject the Risen Christ, reject Jesus whose love and forgiveness and grace cross all boundaries?

If we were worshiping in person today, I would do as my mother did throughout her years of ministry: I would walk down these sacred aisles, tossing water upon you as a reminder that you belong not to a political party, but that you belong to Jesus. You belong to Jesus.

It is time to rise out of the water and begin the new life Jesus is calling us to create. Amen.