



N4118 Cty Rd AB
Luxemburg, WI 54217

Church Office:
P: 920-845-2095
F: 920-845-9075

www.stpaullux.org

Mission Statement

The mission of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran is to strengthen and support our members in their Christian faith through God's Word, the Sacraments, education, prayer and fellowship; thereby preparing them to be witnesses of the Gospel in our community and the world, so that all who believe shall receive the gift of eternal life.

Suburban America often seems like one giant theme park. That was the statement made by a fellow Lutheran visiting from Africa. He was dazzled by the sprawl of malls, fast food restaurants and themed restaurants. "You live in Disneyland," he said. I protested but my protest did not even convince me. He was right. We live in a culture of pleasure and its pursuit. We are a nation of shoppers and a people relentless in the pursuit of all that pleases "me."

It is no wonder that we look for the same thing in the Church that we look for in life. We look for that which makes us happy, that which entertains, that which "feeds our needs" as we define them ... So the Church has been saddled with the same question that faces the shopkeeper, restaurateur, and businessman in America: *How can we draw people in?* It is the trap of commercialism that seems destined to swallow up everything in its path.

Advent does not fit into the shopping culture of America and its predilection for personal pleasure. It does just the opposite. Advent shouts "slow down" to a nation rushing to Christmas. It says "not yet" to a people too accustomed to having their cake and eating it right now. It says "look past yourself" to a people who see everything through the lens of "me."

Of all the seasons of the Church year, Advent seems predestined to be misunderstood, rejected and ignored. And it usually is — even in the Church. We cannot wait. We cannot think of anything but getting what we want. We cannot pause even for a moment in our pursuit of pleasure. To all of this Advent says, "Yes, you can."

Though Advent is a season of repentance, it is not a call to look inside yourself. It is the radical call to look outside yourself to the promise of Eden kept in Christ. It is the radical call to wait by looking at the need for our redemption before we skip to the Gift which is ours in the manger. It is the call to look for the One who came so that we do not miss Him when He comes again.

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What we do in the parish during Advent is to issue the call to slow down, to wait and to look past ourselves. We do this by taking our time (four Sundays and some Wednesdays) getting to the manger. We do this by waiting to sing Christmas carols until Christmas. We do this by staging our journey to Christmas in steps — Advent greens, an Advent wreath, Christmas trees, a Christmas crèche, and then “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night.” We do this by keeping Christmas long after the trees are put outside and the decorations packed away — a full twelve days that stretch out what we have waited so long to celebrate.

Most of all we do this by listening to the Word of the Lord and by hearing that Word with the ears of faith, by the extra discipline of evening worship services and daily devotions, and by the joyful acknowledgment that the Christ of the manger is come among us in the blessed Sacrament to deliver the fulfillment of His promised forgiveness, life and salvation.

One last thing. When we over schedule things at the Church we mirror the busyness of the season in a bad way. Sometimes we have so many things going on at Church during Advent and Christmas that it seems literally like a roller coaster ride to Christmas. It should be slower and much more deliberate. We do not compete with the harried schedules of the world around us by matching them event for event. No, we compete by offering what no one can find except in the Church — the Gospel of the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ! Make sure your Advent and Christmas seasonal events do not hide what is our exclusive offering to those in Christ and those who do not yet know of the gift of salvation.

Too much of the Church already seems like a theme park. Let us make sure that we discourage this comparison by keeping the focus on Christ by slowly and deliberately walking to the manger and by making sure the manger points us to the Cross.

*By the Rev. Larry Peters
Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn.*

Unwrapping the Gifts is a bimonthly publication of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Worship Ministry

Scrip Ordering for the Holidays

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all thro' the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
And filled with *Scrip* Gift Cards for everyone there!

Find a present they'll love while earning for St. Paul,
What a wonderful Christmas will be had by all!
Have a happier holiday with *Scrip*!



Scrip will be ordered on a weekly basis to help meet the Christmas gift-giving needs. Scrip will be ordered every week except for **December 22nd**. Scrip will be ordered the following weeks in December: **December 1, 8, 15, and 29**. Please note that items on the front of the form with an asterisk (*) and all items on the back of the form must be ordered. Please make sure and check out the back as there are a lot of vendors that take Scrip and can be ordered. Please note that there may be a bit of delay in getting some orders through Great Lakes Scrip due to the demand and volume that they are dealing with during the holidays. Therefore, we are urging you to order early. The sooner in the season you order for holiday gift-giving, the better we are able to ensure that you will have what you need. We hope that the increase in ordering will help to meet the needs for those ordering Scrip for the holidays. Thank you for your continued support and use of the Scrip program!



Open Gym is starting up!! Youth 6th grade-college are invited to St. Paul's gym on Sunday nights 7-8:30pm. We usually play basketball and volleyball, but are open to any new ideas.

The youth will be assembling fruit baskets and delivering them to the primetimers of our church on Saturday, December 7th. Please meet in the gym at 1:00pm. After all the baskets are delivered, we will bowl and have pizza. We will not have a gift exchange this year. Please bring \$5 to cover the cost of the pizza. The more the merrier!!!

Christian Service Guild News

Due to the generous giving at our Veteran's Service Ingathering, two large boxes of coffee, candy, books, lap robes, etc and \$515 was taken to the Veteran's Home at King. The Service Guild thanks everyone who gave to honor our veterans.

In December the Service Guild will sponsor a "Hat and Mitten" tree. The tree will be decorated with ornaments to which tags are attached designating either "hat" or "mittens" and an age group. People select an ornament which is theirs to keep and replace it with either a hat or mittens. The tree will remain in place through the New Year. The hats and mittens will then be distributed to area schools to children in need. Please support us in our mission to help others.

The December Meeting of the Christian Service Guild will be held December 4th at 7pm.

Newsletter/Bulletin Information:

Any information for the newsletter or calendar can be emailed to Angie Peterson at apeterson0727@yahoo.com or dropped off in the office. There is a file for information for the newsletter.

Any notes or announcements (i.e. prayer list) for the bulletin can be emailed to Jenny Tenor at jtenor@stpauullux.org or dropped off in the office.

Thank you!

What is Your Most Valuable Possession?

What is your most valuable possession? When you first read this question your mind may quickly scroll through a balance sheet that lists all of your possessions, looking for your asset with the highest value. For most people, you hear their home is their most valuable asset, but for those whose net worth is substantial, that is seldom true. Instead, is it your business, one of your real estate holdings, or your investment portfolio? No matter which asset you may select as the most valuable, you will have picked the wrong one. Our materialistic culture drives us to think of our *things* when we think of our valuables, but there are other non-material things that are worth much more.

So, what is your most valuable asset? It is the time that you still have “banked” in this life. Your “time on this earth” account is all too quickly shrinking with every day that passes. And the most troubling part of this time account is that we cannot see how much we have left. Is it days, months, years, decades?

In [Psalm 90:12](#), Moses asks God to help him use his time account wisely. He prays, “*So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*” Paul said it this way in [Ephesians 5:15-16](#), “*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*” And not only are the days “evil,” they are also very limited.

Keep this in mind: it is not in how much of our *wealth* we give; it is in how much of *ourselves* we give that allows us to fully experience the joy and blessing of giving. We have too much wealth in this country to experience much sacrificial giving from our material possessions. But we have precious little to give from our time account and that is where we learn to give like those who have little.

“Only one life ‘twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”

What is your most valuable asset? How are you using your most valuable asset? Our cry should be, to paraphrase Isaiah 6:8, “Here I am Lord, [*spend*] me”

Courtesy of www.stewardshipministries.org

Elections are right around the corner, please consider giving of yourself, your time to serve on a Board or Office.

Merry Christmas!

Bonnie Lannbrecht, Lon Fager, Paul Janda



Holy Humor

My daughter came home from our Lutheran school one day when in the first grade and I asked what she had learned. She said about the three Wiseman, so I asked her what gifts they had brought and she said, "Gold, 'Frankenstein' and Myrrh."

Faculty/Staff Contact Info

Pastor: James Athey: off2sem@yahoo.com
Principal: Debbie Kline: dkline@stpaullux.org
4K Teacher: Tiffany Dart: tdart@stpaullux.org
4K Teacher: Beth Budnik: bbudnik@stpaullux.org
5K Teacher: Sherry Byrne: sbyrne@stpaullux.org
1st & 2nd Grade: Heidi Schneider: hschneider@stpaullux.org
3rd & 4th Grade: Ruth Bernau: rbernau@stpaullux.org
6th, 7th, & 8th Grade: Ben Phelps: bphelps@stpaullux.org
Secretary: Jenny Tenor: jtenor@stpaullux.org
Newsletter: Angie Peterson: apeterson0727@yahoo.com
Funerals: Tina Peterson – 920-863-5137
Arlene Gruetzmacher –920-845-5048
Prayer Chain: Tina Peterson –920-836-5137



Sunday School Children
Grades 1-8

DVD's are available of the church service. Call the church office at 920-845-2095 and one of our volunteers will deliver it to you.

Need a ride to church? Please notify the church office for a ride to and from church services.

Newsletter Deadline: the 21st of the month.

Join us on Facebook: Search for St. Paul Lutheran Church and School and **LIKE** us today!
