

St. Paul Partners

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Sponsored by Barbara Sloop to the glory of God & wishing a Happy New Year to all!

Epiphany - Abiding and Revealing

Jesus said: *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* + John 15: 10-11 +

As a new year is upon us it is a reminder that the season of Christmas (12 days) is winding down and we are welcoming the season of Epiphany which begins on January 6th. This day is also known as The Epiphany of our Lord and is a day recognized as the day the three Magi (Kings) arrived to bring their gifts and worship the Christ Child.

The word Epiphany comes from an ancient word that means to reveal. If someone has an "aha" moment we can say they have had an "epiphany" as something has been revealed – something that once seemed cloudy or doesn't make sense suddenly becomes clear and comes together. The season of Epiphany will last for the remainder of January and through February which will lead us to Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent and then onward to Easter. During Epiphany our scripture lessons in worship will reveal more and more just who this Christ Child is – Jesus, the Son of God, God incarnate, the word made flesh, the one worthy of being praised, the one who commands us to be baptized as he was also baptized, the one who preaches, teaches and performs miracles.

As our messiah is revealed to us all the more we also have the Lord giving us the call to abide in him. To abide basically means to accept, to believe, and/or to have a relationship with. When a new year begins it is common to make resolutions as a way of getting a fresh start, setting new goals and improving oneself. Unfortunately, many New Year's resolutions that are made, fizzle before mid-

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March. This is usually because many of us make our resolutions out of peer pressure or obligation because the world says – “This is what you need to do.” If those are the main reasons behind resolutions then those resolutions will most likely fail because they don’t come from the heart. Resolutions that succeed are the ones borne out of our true passion and desire and our true passions and desires are revealed to us when we allow ourselves to fully abide with Christ. Abiding in Christ means that we rest in him, we trust, we cling to and we take it on faith that Jesus has us and will not let us go. Knowing we are God’s children and living into that reveals to us who we really are and to whom we belong. Perhaps this year an appropriate resolution would be to resolve to simply abide in Jesus and trust in him to walk with us every step of the way of this journey we call life.

As we continue in this holy time of year, let Jesus be revealed to you for the love he brings and abide in that love and trust. I look forward to being with you during this special time of year as we put our mission into practice to **Witness, Welcome, Worship** and **Work** in the name of our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Ralph



Congratulations to Savannah Lail who was chosen All-Catawba Valley 2A Conference Team Player of the Year for the volleyball team. Savannah is a senior at Maiden High School.

NEW ADDRESS: Keith and Kathy Frye have a new address: 3131 9th St. Drive NE #62, Hickory, NC 28601. Please make a note for your church directory.

Dear St. Paul Family,

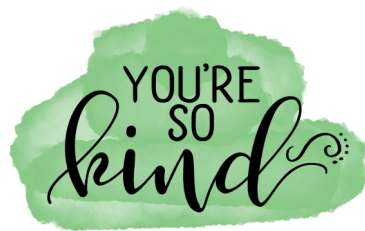
We thank you so much for the generous love offering you gave us at Christmas along with other gifts, cards, prayers and well wishes. We are truly blessed and have been uplifted by your kindness and support. We appreciate this partnership in ministry we share with you. May God richly bless you with good health, safety, joy and peace in 2022.

Love, Pastor Ralph & Mary Kraft

St. Paul Family,

Thank you for the Christmas gift you gave to me this year. You are very kind and generous!

David Miller



JANUARY

Birthdays

January 2	Barbara Reed
January 3	Glenn Herman
January 4	Karina Coulter Wanda Helton
January 5	Roger Frye
January 8	Margaret Ikerd
January 10	Michelle Davis Alice Fry
January 12	Tina Townsend
January 13	Melvin Coulter
January 15	Marty Coulter
January 19	Linda Herman

January 30

Hugh Lindler

January 31

Dylan Lail

JANUARY

Anniversaries

January 11

Keith & Kathy Frye

January 17

Jonathan & River Jarrett

Did We Miss Your Birthday or Anniversary?

If so, please accept our apologies!
Let us know so we can make it right by calling
(828) 464-3853 or email
morgan@stpaulstartown.org

THANK YOU NOTES, CONTINUED

Dear St. Paul,

Thank you for your thoughtfulness and remembrance of me during this Christmas season. Your generous gift will be very helpful as I travel to St. Louis this January.

In Royal Service of the KING, Morgan Lane

Dear St. Paul Bell Choir,

The best people inspire the best in other people. Thank you for giving and sharing your beautiful music. It was certainly a blessing to us all.

Barbara Reed

Dear St. Paul Family,

It's easy to say "thank you" but harder to let you know just how much your thoughtfulness was appreciated. Hope you realize that this gratitude comes from the heart.

Thank you, Mike Reed

Dear People of St. Paul's,

Thank you so much for supporting the Lenoir-Rhyne Care Package projects. With your help we were able to assemble and distribute 375 care packages to LR first year students. Your generosity not only encouraged our students, but also showed them how much the local community cares. Thank you again!

Pastor Todd Cutter



TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Thank you for your continued giving this year. It helps us not only pay bills and salaries but also support the many different ministries we have going on here at St. Paul and the wider church through our NC Synod and ELCA.

If you would like to sign up for electronic giving please contact the church office or visit our website www.stpaulstartown.org where you can find a donate button at the bottom of the home page. Offerings can also be mailed to the church office at 3761 Startown Rd., Newton, NC 28658. Offerings can be dropped off and placed in the black drop box outside the building next to the metal stairs and of course the offering plates during worship on Sunday mornings. Thank you again for your continued financial support of our church.

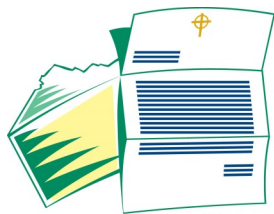
LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

Is my neighbor the guy next door with a flock of chickens and a rooster that heralds every dawn? Or is it the teen down the block who thinks he is the next Richard Petty? Or maybe it's the woman who planted spreading mint right along your fence line? Well..... the answer is yes, these are all our "neighbors" who Christ tells us to love. But our neighbors are also in the next town, state or country. One way we can show our love is to support Lutheran Disaster Relief. They are wherever the need is and they remain when other relief agencies leave. Please consider donating to LDR by noting a specific amount on your weekly contribution envelope or by sending a special gift to:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELCA Gift Processing Center
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

Make checks payable to Lutheran Disaster Response (if designated to a specific disaster, please indicate in the memo line).

As far as your nearby neighbors, be thankful they don't have peacocks, a motorcycle or planted kudzu!



Annual Giving Statements

ANNUAL GIVING STATEMENTS

Annual giving statements will be made available at the end of January. If you have not received yours either electronically or in the mail by February 4th, please contact the Church Office.

ROBIN HOOD.... ALMOST!!

What was the legendary Robin Hood known for? His archery skill, of course! And remember that archery is an Olympic event. St. Paul has its own archery expert. Huh? Who? Luke Warren, son of John and Laura Warren, is our own archery talent. Although Luke only took up archery in September 2021, he qualified for inclusion in the Catawba County Archery Tournament held in December 2021. There were 341 entrants, divided into two groups: elementary and middle school students. Luke placed 4th, achieving a score of 264 points out of a perfect score of 300 points!! His recent sales of peanuts (which many of us purchased) helped raise \$6000.00 which will help fund future competitions. Luke is gearing up for 3 more tournaments in February. Let us wish him well. We're cheering you on, Luke!!



READY, SET, GO!!

"GO" to our January WELCA gathering, that is. It might be cold and dreary outside but you will feel the warmth of love and faith the moment you enter the Fellowship Hall on Monday, January 10th, at 6 PM. We will follow protective pandemic guidelines but that won't diminish the joy we will see in one another's eyes or hear the sound of laughter. In addition to reviewing our Christmas

involvement, we will begin discussing ideas of how we can serve our congregation, community, nation and world in 2022. Please join us for one hour and share your ideas with us – we need you!

LABOR SHORTAGE

We see the "Help Wanted" signs throughout our community. Bonuses are offered for taking a job. St. Paul has a "labor shortage," also. Our openings are for Crucifer, Acolyte, Altar Guild, Lay Reader or Usher. Your pay: knowing you are serving our Lord with your hands, feet or voice. No previous experience is needed – handbooks or hands on: we want to share worship assistant knowledge with everyone who wants to serve. As a member attending Worship, you see that the "job" isn't hard – it just takes a desire to share in the worship experience in a larger way. Talk to a current "employee" about serving or just sign up on the sheets posted on the Bulletin Board outside the Church Office.



WORSHIP ASSISTANTS



Epiphany — Pay Attention

More than 2,000 years ago, a surprising and intriguing new star appeared in our galaxy. Hardly anyone noticed, but some did. This coming Thursday, January 6, 2022, is the Feast of the Epiphany. That which had been hidden is now revealed. The “Aha!” moment. Epiphany. Matthew’s Gospel tells us, “In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’”

Magi. Magicians. Zoroastrians. Astrologers. These were the ones who came from the east in search of the newborn King of the Jews. A familiar, yet odd, story in the sense that the Christ gets the attention of non-Jews from foreign lands because of signs in the stars. Really? Zodiac Jesus?

I must admit that I always cringe a bit when someone offers up a trite theological nugget like, “Well, religious differences don’t really matter. We’re all just on different roads that lead to the same place.” I often want to reply sarcastically, “Is that so? Then why don’t you just hop on any random road after church and see if you wind up at home?” But then I realize that these Magi don’t understand or care much about insider things like the covenant with Abraham, Torah, Exodus, circumcision, the Davidic dynasty, the prophets, deliverance from exile, and the hope for Messiah that comprise Judaism, yet they still come to worship Jesus, the “King of the Jews.” They’re clearly outsiders. Or they *had been*.

What they do understand is that creation itself—the heavens—has been transformed and that whoever’s birth would call forth the star of Bethlehem’s sign must be worthy of long journeys, expensive gifts, and awe that issues forth in worship. And then God speaks to these wise ones in a dream. A different road, indeed, led them to the Christ and to the God whom that Christ most fully reveals! The lines of insider vs. outsider are forever blurred, if not completely erased! For some. Others, like Herod, will go to any length to kill even a baby who might eventually upset the status quo and threaten his hold on power.

You might (or might not) know that Bishop Eaton’s and the ELCA’s “Future Directions” reorganization is heavily focused on reaching new people. A least a million in the next few years.

They may or may not show up in our buildings and for our programs, but we're reaching out to them, and while we treasure all age groups and demographics as image-of-God and redeemed-in-Christ precious children, we are unashamedly focusing on outreach to younger people and to ethnic-specific groups whom this church (ELCA and predecessor bodies) has miserably failed to reach. We are committed to not becoming Herod-like preservers of institution and status quo at all costs, but seekers, followers, of Jesus.

Our purpose, our calling, as church is to make Christ known and then, with the Spirit's help, to make disciples who worship, learn, pray, care, give, and serve. We've been tiptoeing as Church, looking over our shoulders, worrying about our self-preservation, who's in and who's out, long enough. It's time to learn again to be bold, to expand the circle, to resolve to be vessels of Christ, the light of the world, as our primary purpose rather than being entirely consumed by polarized insider debates.

That's really what the Epiphany is all about. Had there been any question before, this God of the Jews is now revealed beyond any doubt to all people. Celestial bodies shine and point to Jesus who, though clearly a Jew, brings hope and salvation to all people. Even me, in my theological snobbery. Even you. Not only earth, but galaxies shine, dance, and point the way, if we, with the Magi, but pay attention!

Walking with you,



The Rev. Timothy M. Smith, NC Synod Bishop



The January meeting of the Congregation Council will meet on Sunday, January 9th in the Fellowship Hall, following worship.

Council Notes

- Changes to the Church Constitution will be made to satisfy the NC Synod.
- Council will continue to meet on 2nd Sunday of the month follow worship.
- Bids being sought to strip and wax lower level and have high traffic areas of carpet cleaned.
- We are working on a way to display the paintings from our 2005, 100-year celebration.

St. Paul Lutheran Church

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Newton, NC 28658

Phone: (828) 464-3853

www.StPaulStartown.org

STAMP
HERE

<<Address Here>>

We the people of St. Paul are called and empowered by God- To **Witness** through Christ; To **Welcome** everyone through the Holy Spirit; To **Worship** with joy; and To **Work** with God to meet the needs of our community.



Worship with us ONLINE on Facebook Live or in person!

Every Sunday at 10:00am.