

Sponsored by Marie Scronce in memory of Earl Scronce

LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, GLOBALLY

Dear St. Paul Family,

For weeks now (or maybe longer) we have been hearing the reports and seeing the images of all these container ships sitting and waiting patiently in the ports along the East and West coasts. We know why they are waiting – there is a backlog in the system of getting them unloaded from the ships, loaded onto trucks and transported to warehouses where they are then taken to the stores for us to buy, use and consume. As a result we have also heard the reports that until the backlog can be rectified there may be a shortage of goods on local shelves and anyone ordering for Christmas needs to have done it weeks ago, lest it may not arrive on time from Santa Claus. The angst and frustration from this news has led many to play the blame game and point fingers. Everyone from the President to Congress to governors to mayors to truck drivers to accusations of people not wanting to work – it's all there on social media for anyone willing to sift through it. While we know that blaming rarely does any good it seems that this issue (like many) is multi-plex and is one more challenge we face in a world still caught in the grips of a deadly pandemic. It is a pandemic that has affected us locally, nationally and globally. There have even been some speculations that it will “ruin Christmas” again this year. Of course, all one has to do is

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review the story “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” to realize that for Christians, Christmas does not depend on what comes from a store.

As of this writing I have not seen completely empty store shelves like we were seeing 18 months ago but we do know parts for some things are harder to get these days. Instead of seeing this as one more set back, perhaps we would serve ourselves and our neighbors well to see this as more of an opportunity. This is an opportunity to reflect on what is important to us and where our priorities ought to be and, of course, as we observe the holiday of thanksgiving this month it is a perfect time to be mindful of all the grace and blessings God has first bestowed upon us.

Maybe some things won't be available in time for Christmas on the national or international level but on the local level there are a variety of small, local mom and pop type stores selling a variety of goods and services who would love to have you come in and look around and even buy something. There is even a store over in Viewmont across from Mt. Olive Lutheran Church called “Unique World Gifts” which sells items made by people in developing countries. They are part of a network which helps poor people in other countries make a living. As the weather is now turning cooler they also have

chocolate bars in stock made from sustainable cocoa using environmentally friendly practices. They can't carry chocolate in the warmer months due to issues of melting while being shipped. If you get this newsletter and don't live in Catawba County I'm sure there are local stores in your area willing to serve you. Your friends and loved ones may also appreciate receiving a gift hand-made by you, which reminds me we do have prayer shawls and lap robes lovingly hand stitched by members of our church which you can pick up and give to anyone you think may need and appreciate them.

Regarding our larger church, the ELCA there are ways you can give a monetary gift in honor or memory of someone for Christmas through any number of ministries including the seminaries, colleges, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services, ELCA World Hunger fund and the Good Gifts Heifer project just to name a few. I am not receiving a commission or endorsement by lifting up these businesses and opportunities. I am just trying to point out a different approach and other alternatives to what we may be used to from days past.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find a message from Bishop Tim Smith regarding how the synod office has been reacting to the pandemic and new plans for mission and

ministry from the synodical level. As we have all been affected in some way by this pandemic, we can be thankful we belong to a church that relates to us in positive ways that affect us locally, nationally and globally. As the Lord calls us to be good stewards of all the blessings we have received, let this be an opportunity to share our blessings with a hurting world that needs love, forgiveness, grace and mercy. I look forward to being with you as we discern ongoing opportunities to put our mission into practice to Witness, Welcome, Worship and Work in the name of our Lord.

Your in Christ,
Pastor Ralph

NOVEMBER

Birthdays

November 10	Sundee Southers
November 17	David Dowell
November 21	Mark Scott
November 22	Tanner Townsend
November 23	Mary Kraft
November 26	Paul Lail

NOVEMBER

Anniversaries

November 18	James & Robin Fincannon
November 25	Tony & Beverly Moore

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



Upcoming Meetings

- **Music & Worship Team**
Sunday, November 7th, following worship, in the Conference Room
- **Church Council**
Sunday, November 14th, following worship, in the Fellowship Hall
- **Annual Congregational Meeting**
Sunday, November 21st, following worship, in the Sanctuary

Reminder! Daylight Saving Time Ends the night of November 6th.
 Set your clocks back one hour and enjoy the extra rest!





OH, BOY!! (AND GIRL!!)

If you think that all monthly St. Paul WELCA hourly meetings are dry, boring and just a time for a bunch of church ladies to chatter on, blah, blah, blah, then you certainly haven't been to a meeting!!! While executing and supporting a wide variety of projects, such as Christmas in July, Agape Day Camp, homebound visitations, card ministry, we also help appoint the Sanctuary for various special

services. Of course, we take turns offering devotions and vote on how our monthly offerings are to be used. But we also find a reason to celebrate special events. This year we have already had a great surprise retirement party for one member and in November we are having a "Granny" Shower for 2 of our members! Please come and join us on November 8th at 6 PM in the Fellowship Hall as we rejoice with the future "grannies." Gail Blackburn, whose daughter Kim has already given Gail and Richard 2 granddaughters and one grandson, is excited about the prospect of having a grandson in November with the last name "Blackburn"! And Donna and David Miller are expecting a really special Christmas gift: a first grandchild, a granddaughter around December 26th! Come and celebrate with us. And if you need a ride, just ask a WELCA member or call the Church Office.

APPOINT, NOT DECORATE!!

Please make sure you have marked your calendar for November 27, 2021, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. That's when we will "appoint" the Sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. Of course, we will also "decorate" the Fellowship Hall that morning. We plan to start at 9:00 AM and depending on the number of helping hands, we expect to be done in about 2 hours. We need both men and women, those who don't mind climbing a ladder, those who can scamper up and down stairs and those who have a good eye for Chrismon placement and those who just want to take part in the preparation for our celebration of Christ's birth.



**Help Us "Spruce"
Up the Church!**

THANK YOU FOR CARING!

A profound note of appreciation goes to all of you who donated some of your "treasure" to help support the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services during October. The "Donation Station" may be gone but the money collected will go so far to help our neighbors around the world. Our dollars will help provide support, advocacy and justice to those seeking safety for themselves and their families.



**Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service**

YOU PICK 'EM!!

Nope, we aren't talking about apples. We're talking about picking Congregational Council members. Two current Council members' tenure ends next month and that creates three vacancies to be filled by your votes. During our Annual Congregational Meeting to be held on November 21st, after Worship, we will vote for three members to serve a three-year term. When you receive the biographies of those nominated, please prayerfully review and consider each person and come to the meeting ready to vote for those individuals who, by representing us, will help lead our Church forward for the next three years. And we will also review and adopt a spending plan for 2022.



IT'S NOT TOO LATE!!

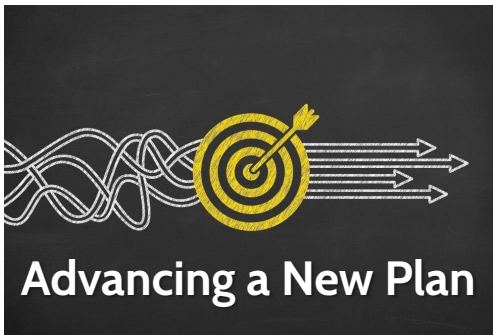
Nope, it's not too late to join the Handbell Choir. Honestly, we have more bells than hands! Left-handed, right-handed, both-handed – it doesn't matter! Come and be part of the Christmas musical offerings being rehearsed on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 7:00 PM.

For All the Saints



ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY

St. Paul Lutheran Church-Startown will honor all the saints who have gone before us during our Worship on November 7, 2021. We will specifically remember Sterling Jarrett, Kim Bass, Edith Lerch and Willie Huffman. And we are asking you to feel good about bringing a picture or two or three of your family's "saints." Grandparents, mothers, fathers, siblings and any other family members that have preceded you in the Resurrection – bring them to church with you on November 7th and display them on the windowsills in the Sanctuary. We are so blessed to have such a rich ancestry of faithful families.



At the beginning of 2021, facing a pandemic and a bishop election, our synod staff shared with Synod Council that there would be a “bishop transition” no matter who was elected. The four-year strategic plan begun in 2017 would be expiring either way. The staff has been working—based on our core values of Jesus, Generosity, Relationship, and Reconciliation—on a new four-year strategic plan for the synod, and last month the Synod Council excitedly approved it.

Here’s the short version of that plan which will guide our ministry work for the next four years:

- ⇒ Develop & Equip Leadership Teams to undergird the process.
- ⇒ Interim Support including development of strategy and ongoing support network.
- ⇒ Intentional Care of Rostered Ministers including introducing some sort of chaplain for rostered ministers and families.
- ⇒ Develop a Team for Introducing Spiritual Direction into the culture of the synod including invitations for practicing individual and congregational discernment.
- ⇒ Re-envision the Call Process according to the synodical core values with an added emphasis on pastoral care of candidates and congregations.
- ⇒ Develop a Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAM) Program and begin training cohorts.
- ⇒ Connect Regularly with and Provide Training for Congregation Councils, Presidents, and Treasurers—building on work which was begun during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ⇒ Develop Cultural Competency as a part of the Vitality & Discipleship work of the synod.
- ⇒ Develop Evangelism as part of the Outreach & Justice work of the synod.
- ⇒ Develop a Systemic Approach to Revitalization/Holy Closure through the use of synodical administration.

In addition, as revealed in our 2018 Communications Audit, we know we need to increase our social media and digital presence and fill the ministry priority and the staff slot for Social Justice and Advocacy Ministry that has been vacant this whole calendar year.

The church was already changing at light speed, and this interminable pandemic has changed it even more. We are, like all of you, committed to adapting our synod work approach to this changing environment with continued priority of Vital Congregations and Whole and Healthy Leaders. I and our staff are excited about these new priorities outlined above. Please understand that those bullet points are just the new things. There will still be Candidacy, Campus Ministry, Supply Pastors, and so many of the things that we were already doing. We’re not retreating in these uncertain times; we are advancing!

Changing priorities also mean reorganizing the staff around these priorities. This one-pager details the main changes in staff responsibilities beginning in 2022. [See: <https://www.nclutheran.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Synod-Staff-Changes-one-pager.pdf>]

We're so pleased that the Synod Council has called Pastor CeCee Mills as an Assistant to the Bishop for Call Process and Shared Ministry. She as well as Pastor Sara in Candidacy and I as a generalist will share a full-time administrative assistant, 2016 L-R graduate Sarah Greene, who starts October 18. My current admin, Kathy Muth, will be retiring at the end of this year. We'll miss her! We will install Pastor CeCee as an assistant to the bishop at our Wednesday Zoom call at 11 a.m. on October 27.

I'm immensely grateful to Sandra Cline, our Call Process Coordinator for six years, without whom I couldn't have navigated that constant and central piece of synodical responsibility. As that full-time position will go away in the new structure, she will begin a well-deserved retirement at the end of this year. If in early 2022 I seem not to know so much what's going on everywhere, it's because the synod's mysterious ubiquitous powers go with her. We owe her a lot. I know I do.

We'll also revamp our technology and communication staffing based on the Communications Audit which revealed that we do a great job of communicating to "insiders" but not so well to others, especially via digital media. We discerned that we need a Digital Communication Assistant (full-time) supervised by Catherine Fink, beginning 2022. We will say goodbye and thank-you to Rick Godby after 20 years of service in communications and IT. He has been pivotal in the new website, and he's famous now for producing our "Seriously" video and others. Holly Zemke has agreed to be our other staff position to help with general administration and Deacon Tammy's administrative needs.

Lastly, Carissa Abraham, currently assisting Candidacy and Leadership (Sara and Tammy) will move to being Assistant for Social Justice and Advocacy including Racial Justice as well as Youth Ministry (Tammy will still work with youth leaders). We have farmed out some of Pastor Danielle's (DEM) portfolio to others so that with Carissa she will fill the half-time void of the unfilled SJAM person on our staff beginning in 2022.

So that's where we are. Or technically, where we're headed for the beginning of 2022, as we strive to reflect our core values of Jesus-Centered, Generosity, Relationship, and Reconciliation and our guiding principles of Vital Congregations, Whole and Healthy Leaders, Collaboration, and Prophetic Voice. For the sake of the Gospel. For the sake of the world. We are blessed to walk with you—the congregations and leaders of the NC Synod. We exist as synod because of and for you. We're excited about our new plan, and we'll do our best!

Walking with you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim".

NC Synod Bishop

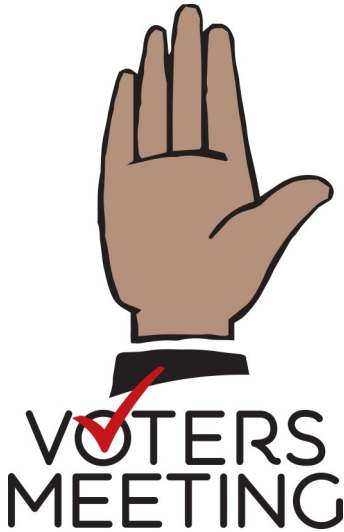
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<<Address Here>>

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.



Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, November 21st, 2021
Immediately following 10am Worship