



The Messenger

The Newsletter of First Saint Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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*My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection.
(Philippians 3.10)*

As I sat down to write, a memory of 2020 came to mind. Specifically, the day I was to officiate at my granddaughter's wedding: March 21. However, because of pandemic shut down scheduled that weekend, the venue in Indiana cancelled the event. Therefore, the ceremony was held in the groom's friend's garage that had recently been converted into an exercise gym. Only a small group of close family and friends attended, and I remember standing in front of the bride and groom under a squat rack decorated as a wedding trellis.

But that was only a foretaste of the future disruption as I gazed on highways totally deserted the next day. Nor would I have ever imagined that I would be forced to do recorded services for placement on YouTube in front of a sanctuary with no one in the pews. However, my issues were minor compared to that of others. Throughout the nation there was a shaking and not just from sickness. Unemployment, the failure of innumerable business, massive tax shortfalls, and crises in public education brought on major disruptions. Then, if that wasn't enough, all of the resultant anxiety was escalated by massive protests following the death of George Floyd in the early summer of 2020.

Past history tells us that the church has been a bulwark in troubled times, but 2020 revealed otherwise. For a long time, the church had been asleep – doing its own thing while sustaining major losses in membership since 2000. But then came the tremors. Suddenly Christian churches were caught up in the midst of the confusion regarding masks, vaccines, and how to deal with the inequity of the government mandating closures while liquor stores were allowed to remain open. Soon reports of government overreach upon church facilities began to appear. Rudely awakened, we sat up, groggily rubbing our eyes and looking around at an unfamiliar landscape.

Yes, there was a whole lot of shaking going on, and, personally, I believe that God allowed it. He loves the church and knew that it is time for it to be sifted and purified. In St. Matthew's parable of the sower Jesus revealed that life's distresses will cause people not solidly founded in the faith to fall away. How true this was the case during Covid-19. Thirty percent of previous church attendees failed to come back. Then that same parable described an even greater force that has contributed to the church's shaking. Tragically the seed of faith in people's hearts would be choked out by the thorns of

materialistic pursuits and thus make faith life ineffective.

Truth be told, hasn't the church slipped into a sluggish mode that focuses on comfort and convenience? We've defaulted to, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words, "cheap grace." Instead of discipleship and commitment, the Christian church has slipped into an "easy believe-ism" that doesn't require much of us. One's involvement becomes limited to Easter and Christmas or when the weather isn't good, or there's no special sporting event going on.

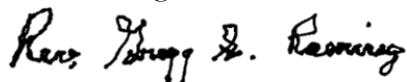
I say this not to hand anyone a sense of guilt and shame, but I don't think we can wake up and change our condition until we recognize the condition we are in. So, God is allowing the shaking and through it all I believe that He is asking each of us "What are your priorities? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to follow Me? Are you prepared to make personal sacrifices and invest yourself here, in this congregation and this community?"

"Easy believe-ism." Can you see us getting out of this slump on our own accord? No, we need power from above, and, personally, I believe it hinges on the heart and core of what Easter is all about through our greater understanding of the Resurrection. In our church tradition there is much attention given to Jesus' death on the cross (for our justification) rather than the Resurrection (for our sanctification). Of course, the assurance of our justification is a wonderful blessing, but can it not become a big source of easy believe-ism? "Jesus died on the cross for my sins." Yes, that's great, but it can lead to the assumption: "Why do I have to go to church? I'm fine with God already!" Yet, here's where that critical element often gets lost in the shuffle. May we more carefully note that it's not just Jesus' death on the cross that saves us, but also His resurrection. That's because the Resurrection brings the future new creation, the omnipotent power through which God renews and heals the world, into our present. It's a Presence and Power able to come to us and remake us. It's the power St. Paul desired to know and experience in the passages quoted above from Phil. 3:10. Yet, how often do you hear the resurrection talked about extensively outside of Easter Sunday? Too often, it's like a seasonal theme that gets stuck in the back of the drawer the rest of the year.

So how about a renewed emphasis in the real game changer? The power of the Resurrection is the dynamic that opens up a new rhythm of life, a way of looking at and living in the world. If Jesus was raised from the dead, it changes everything – how we conduct relationships, our attitudes toward wealth and power, how we work in our vocations, and how we are to rightly live out our faith regarding the issues of sexuality, race relations, and justice.

Yes, our post-Covid nation may well experience the shaking of more big trouble ahead. Yet, as we would live in the power of Christ's Resurrection, there can nevertheless be a time of flourishing of the church. As we actively live out our faith in the light of the new creation, we are enabled to offer hope and grace to those in the midst of the quaking. May this flourishing increase in the new season with your next pastor at First St. Paul's as the light of your good works would shine – one day, one conversation, one person at a time where faith is stirred and the desire to draw closer to Christ and the way of a disciple.

Easter blessings,



Pastor Gregg
Vacancy Pastor

Call Extended to Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Leininger

After eleven months of meetings (well over twenty), discussion, planning, interviews (both ZOOM and in-person), and prayerful consideration, the Call Committee finished sifting through the dozen candidates nominated to fill our pastoral vacancy. At a Voters' Assembly held in the sanctuary on Sunday March 19, the congregation voted unanimously (on the first vote) to extend a Call to the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Leininger, campus pastor at Concordia University Chicago.

Many of you may be familiar with Rev. Leininger since he is a member of First Saint Paul's, although he has been unable to frequently worship here because of his commitments preaching and leading worship services at Concordia University during the academic year.

Following synod guidelines, he has about five weeks to reach a decision. This will be an intense period of prayer and contemplation for Jeff and his family while he seeks to discern God's will. During this period, we should refrain from pestering Jeff and his family or lobbying or encouraging him to decide one way or the other. Nevertheless, you should not feel constrained from congratulating him on receiving the Call and wishing him well. For us, this should be a time for prayer and patient waiting, praying that the Lord lead Jeff to a clear decision as to where He wants Jeff to serve.

Howard Ansorge, Call Committee Chair
March 31, 2023

Easter Baskets for Refugee Children in Downtown Chicago

The Chicago Help Initiative (CHI) asked for our help in receiving and storing Easter Baskets for refugee children currently residing in temporary downtown Chicago housing.

Initially, we thought we would ask our congregation to bring in some baskets to help reach the goal of 300, but we have far exceeded that goal! Just over 500 baskets were collected at First Saint Paul's alone.

As a result of this generosity, extra baskets will be donated to the Ronald McDonald house for the children they assist.

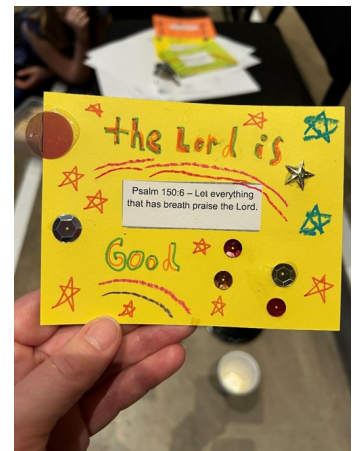
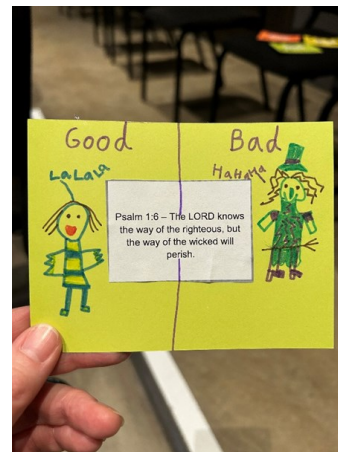
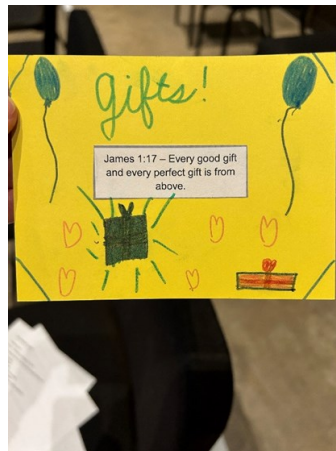
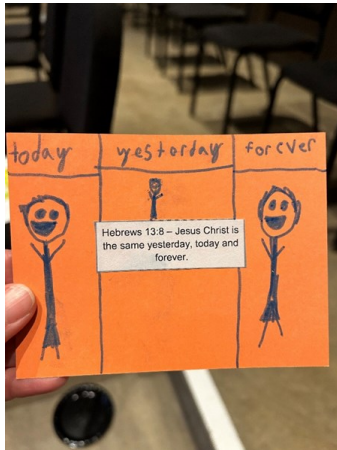


Sunday School: The Adventure continues!

March 2023 episode entitled: There is never a dull moment at Sunday School!

We have been diligently learning about the timeline of Jesus from Birth to Crucifixion.

We have also begun a project of memorizing bible verses as part of an inspirational art piece intended for the Fellowship Hall. Every week, each child has been given a verse to reflect on, personalize artistically on card in the media of their choice and then memorize. The three in attendance on 3/19 even continued this work silently during the Voter's Assembly in the choir loft!



Other fun adventures: After Steve Wentz treated the congregation to a wonderful talk about our organ at FSPs, his daughter, Margaret Wentz, was so kind as to show the Sunday School children the INSIDE of the organ! Wow! Here are some photos of their adventure!



Next up!

4/2 Palm Sunday: We are learning about the events of Holy Week from Sunday to Sunday: Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the clearing of the Temple, Last Supper, Crucifixion and Death on the cross and his glorious Resurrection!

4/9 Easter Sunday: The children will be bringing back the Alleluias! Spoiler alert: we may even include the toddlers! There will be baskets brimming with candy and an Easter egg hunt.

Volunteers are always appreciated! Please let me know if you would like to help in any way! Email Betsy Taylor: betsytaylorpenningon@yahoo.com or leave a note in the Christian Education cubby!

Social Ministry at First Saint Paul's

Our social ministry efforts have contributed to the efforts of a fellow Lutheran church - Immanuel Lutheran in Hillside, IL.

A friend of FSP's connected us with a food broker in Northbrook. The owner was impressed with FSP's history of Community Meals service and offered to donate various types of food. They do not operate in the city, so we'd have to drive out to pick up the donations, some of which would require a big truck with a lift gate! I asked Lutheran Church Charities if they had access to such a vehicle. They do not, but they said Immanuel Lutheran did, and they are far closer to the food broker's location than we are. Immanuel made their first pick-up of donated

food on March 30. Immanuel serves meals as well as supplying many food pantries and soup kitchens, so through them we have greatly expanded FSP's meals outreach.

Plus, we still have access to more manageable allotments of donated food over time, so should we have volunteers willing to drive out to Northbrook to pick up a car load or minivan full of food and beverages, we could do so!

~Mike Cacicio

Wednesday Noon Bible Study: Growing Older & Wiser

Having finished our study "Never Beyond Hope," the Wednesday Bible Study is now following "Growing Older and Wiser" by Dale and Sandy Larson. Please join us in person or on Zoom each week for this time of study and prayer.

Fun at the Pancake Breakfast

On February 19, the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday, First Saint Paul's hosted a pancake breakfast after the service to lead us into the season of Lent.

More than 80 people enjoyed the savory pancakes with a wide variety of toppings along with delicious sausage and of course the usual variety of coffees and drinks. We appreciate the time and work that went into the event.

Thanks also to the congregation for the donations to Wunder's Cemetery!



Sharing & Caring 2023

During Lent, we collected special offerings for five ministries that support people in need. So far we have collected:

Wunder's Cemetery

collected \$331

Founded in 1859 and originally called The First German Lutheran or The Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery, Wunder's Cemetery was renamed Wunder's Cemetery Association to honor the Rev. Heinrich Wunder, pastor of First Saint Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church.

Lutheran Church Charities

collected \$470

Headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois, LLC is a nonprofit ministry that helps support Christian human care ministries of the church. LCC ministries include: disaster and crisis response, k-9 comfort teams for crisis, police and military support, and court system care.

St. Matthew's Soup Kitchen

collected \$1,160

Located in the Pilsen Community to reach the growing number of homeless and unemployed people, the Soup Kitchen provides hot meals to feed the hungry and shares devotions to feed their souls. At the same time, it provides services in English and Spanish in a poverty stricken community of mostly Latino families.

The Chicago Help Initiative

collected \$490

CHI works to educate local businesses and residents as to how they can help ease the plight of the homeless, disadvantaged and out of work individuals and improve their well-being, self-esteem and productivity.

Lutheran Child and Family Services

collected \$440

LCFS transforms lives through its core child welfare services, including foster care and adoption, and other services to individuals and families.

First Saint Paul's is a polling location!

Some members may not be aware of the fact that FSP's Fellowship Hall serves as a polling place for the City of Chicago, and has done so for many years. Here are two workers for the City's cartage company delivering the secured cabinet containing the voting machines for the April 4th run-off elections:



"Drying Palms" by Mike Cacicio



Lenten Hymn Meditations

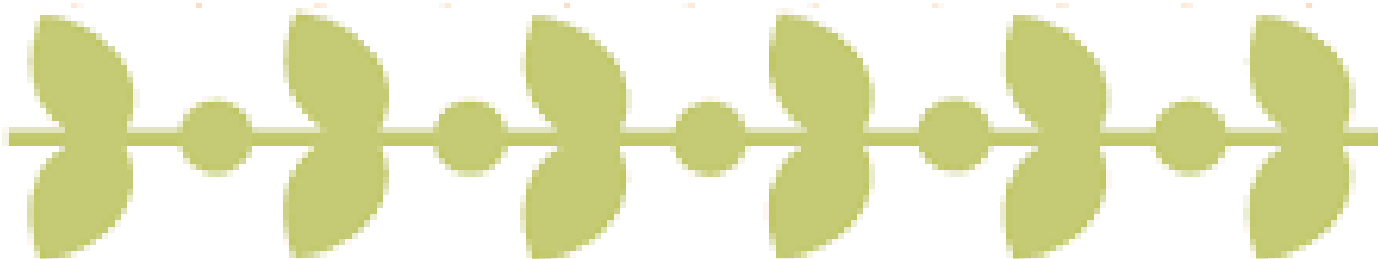
As part of our Lenten meditations this year, we considered various hymns that are meaningful for the season. Response to the request in February resulted in twenty hymns, of which only two were named twice. Here is the list of hymns suggested in alpha order based on the first line, with hymn numbers as reference:

Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound 744
 Beautiful Savior (2 times) 537
 Blessed Assurance WOV 699 (blue hymnal)
 Chief of Sinners Though I Be 611
 Christ, the Life of All the Living 420
 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing 686
 Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain 435
 Holy, Holy, Holy 507
 I Come, O Savior to Thy Table 618
 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross
 Jesus Sinners Doth Receive 609
 Just As I Am, without One Plea 570
 Lamb of God, We Fall Before Thee (previous hymnal)
 My Song Is Love Unknown (2 times) 430
 Nearer My God to Thee (previous hymnal)
 O Dearest Jesus 439
 O God Beyond All Praising WOV 797 (blue hymnal)
 Precious Lord, Take My Hand 739
 There Is a Green Hill Far Away (previous hymnal)
 Were You There 456

Eight of these hymns—the ones most closely linked to the Lenten season and Holy Week—were chosen. We hope to include as many of the remaining ones in a future time of hymn singing. Many thanks to all who suggested hymns and all who watched the videos. Special thanks to Miranda Munson and Ken Reyes who sang the hymns for recording, and to Lydia Stucki, our office administrator, for her recording and expert editing of each of the videos.

Watch now on YouTube!

The Lenten Hymn Meditations, as well as Pastor Gregg's midweek Lent reflections, are available online at www.youtube.com/@FSPaulsChicago/



Schedule of Events

- **Apr. 9: Easter**, service at 9:30am, followed by Easter Breakfast at 11am
- **Apr. 12:** Church Council Meeting at 7pm
- **Apr. 29:** Choir Rehearsal from 9:30 - 11am
- **May 9:** Board of Worship & Music Meeting at 7:15pm
- **May 13:** Foot Clinic at 10am
- **May 28:** Pentecost Sunday

April 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 Choir Rehearsal
2 Palm Sunday	3	4 Polling Location	5	6 Maundy Thursday— service 7pm	7 Good Friday— service 7pm	8 Choir Rehearsal
9 Easter — service & breakfast	10	11	12 7pm Church Council	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 Choir Rehearsal
30						

WEEKLY

Each week at First Saint Pauls:

Sundays

- ◆ Divine Worship at 9:30am
- ◆ Adult Bible Class & Adult Forums at 11am
- ◆ Sunday School at 11am
- ◆ AA Groups meet at the church at 4:30pm & 6pm

Wednesdays

- ◆ Chicago Help Initiative Food Drop— Off starts at 9am
- ◆ Wednesday Noon Bible Study in person and over Zoom

Saturdays

- ◆ Community Meals Ministry starts at 8:30am

May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Board of Worship & Music	10	11	12	13 Foot Clinic 10am
14 Mother's Day	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 Pentecost	29 Memorial Day	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Praying Through the Church

BECAUSE WE ARE A CHURCH FAMILY, a community of faith, we have a concern for one another—a concern that is expressed on Sunday mornings as we pray for members of our church family by name.

WE PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER, remembering the words of St. Paul to the Apostle to Timothy, “I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...” and the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

WE ALSO ENCOURAGE members and friends of the congregation to make their prayer requests, births, illnesses, deaths, anniversaries, and special occasions for intercession or thanksgiving known to the pastor, preferably before the Sunday morning services, but in cases of emergency, right up to the service time.

THE FOLLOWING FRIENDS & MEMBERS of our church family will be remembered in the services of worship during the months of April and May.

April 2

Roseann Hubbard || Dylan Huber || Esther Joseph
Al Jacoby & Kelley Gibson || Helga Kairies
Natalie, Daniel, and Joseph Johnson || Frank & Pam Kaji

April 9

Trevor Kalish || Michael Kivi || Cheryl & Don Kobetsky
Mark Knoblauch || Linda Kimbrough || Julia Kohler

April 16

Diane Krizan || Kim Krubeck and Lena
Christie, Joe, and Avery Lacy || Vicki Ladage
Barbara & Timothy Laken || Mary Langman

April 23

Jeff & Rachel Leininger, Grace and Andy
Sandy Lawrence || Michael Leonhardt & Karla Lewis
Virginia Liles-Dudley and Jesse || Jody Lucey
Lynn Luchtenberg

April 30

Juliana Lutz || Christine Lutze || Evan Majic
Jen Masengarb || Karen Malonis & Ned Dikmen
Georgianne Marcinkovich & Charlie Hasbrouck
John & Judy Mason

Official Acts 2023

Deaths

Lynda Kivi, March 10, 2023

Transferred Out

Seth Raebel to St. James Lutheran

Moved, No Transfer

Jonathan Dedmon to Coral Gables, FL

May 7

John Menet & Beverly White, Ted || Jane Meyer
Robert Miller || Sue Mino || Jo Anne Rioli Moeller
Isabella and Sevilla Cartagena || Leslie Moeller

May 14

Paul & Chie Moeller, Paul III, Frederick, Bartholomew,
and Chihaya || Karol Moller
Gavin & Susan Morgan, Gabriel, Jacob, and Samantha
Nancy Morgan

May 21

Madeline Muecke || Isaac Oludare
Kofo & Taiwo Ogunyankin, Tolu, Tobi, and Kemi
Shane Otten || Adam & Cassandra Peck, Anna

May 28

Gail Peck || Gail Peterson
Chris & Connie Rademacher || Michelle Rae
Janette Ramirez || Tom & Gretchen Randall

FIRST SAINT PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

*First Saint Paul's, established in 1846,
is the oldest Lutheran Church in Chicago.
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was
founded when historic meetings were held
here in 1847.*

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CHURCH STAFF

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Lydia H. Stucki
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Cindy Goers
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SERVICES OF WORSHIP

Sundays

Divine Service at 9:30am in person
and livestreamed

Adult Bible Class at 11am

Sunday School (ages 4-10) at 11am

HOLY COMMUNION

Celebrated every Sunday morning

ELECTED CHURCH OFFICERS

* Voting member of Church Council

Chairman*

Gavin Morgan

Vice Chairman*

Susan Rosborough

Recording Secretary

Robin Tangren

Assistant Recording Secretary

Jody Lucey

Treasurer*

Bryan Schneider

Assistant Treasurer

Cheryl Kobetsky

Financial Secretary

Pam Kaji

Assistant Financial Secretary

Arlene Dahm

Membership Secretary

Gretchen Randall

Chair, Board of Christian Education*

Betsy Pennington Taylor

Chair, Board of Stewardship*

Asa Carter

Chair, Board of Evangelism & Outreach*

Vacant

Chair, Board of Social Ministry*

Vacant

Chair, Board of Worship & Music*

Janette Ramirez

Chair, Board of Deacons*

Buff Bethlen

Board of Elders

Howard Ansoorge

Doug Harkness

Christine Lutz

Susan Morgan

David Rogner, Chair*

Board of Trustees

Tom Boisseau

Michael Cacicio, Chair*

Dwight Deppen

Alex Griebel

Robert Miller

Deacons

Buff Bethlen, Chair*

Diane Krizan

Liz Lassiter

April Szymanski

Allison Warren

Nominating Committee

Nancy Ansoorge

Amy Harkness

John Mason

Betsy Pennington Taylor

Mike Schubert, Chair

COMMITTEE/GROUPS CHAIRS/CONTACTS

Altar Guild

Sandy Lawrence

Communion Assistant Coordinator

Janette Ramirez

Community Meals

Mike Cacicio

Concordia Cemetery

John Stodden

Human Resources Committee

Susan Rosborough

Liturgical Arts

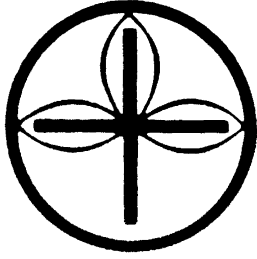
Darlene Fahrenkrog

Lutheran Home

Susan Rosborough

Wunder's Cemetery

Dwight Deppen



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“We welcome you to be at home among us.”