

The Epistle

Saint Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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The Reverend Matthew Casey Stabe, STS, Pastor

October 2012

God's Work, Our Hands: Stay with; Raise up; Send Out

FROM THE PASTOR

Thank You

- Thank you for your patience over the revising of our Building Use Policy and changing of the locks on the church building's doors. In short, the Council made these moves to assert control over the building and for security reasons. The Quilt Show that took place during September's Fall Festival forced the security issue. As expected, a few people were upset by this, and looking back, we, the Council could have, should have handled this differently. We can only ask for forgiveness from and seek reconciliation with those who have taken issue with us in the hope that we can move forward and do better.
- Well, actually, you can thank me. If you noticed that the front door of the Parsonage is looking much better lately, it is because I painted the inside and stained the outside of it. That turned out to be a much bigger project than I thought it would be. Now, I'm working on the back door. Watch what happens!

I Said It before, I'll Say It Again

As I have said many times, mind reading, extra-sensory perception, clairvoyance and other powers of prediction are not required to be a pastor in the Lutheran Church! The HIPPA Law that went into effect in 2003 greatly limits what information can be given about patients of healthcare institutions, like hospitals and nursing homes. Therefore, if there is a pastoral care need, please let us know so that we can respond appropriately. Hospitals, nursing homes and personal care homes cannot and will not provide that information. Help us out, here, folks! Let us know when a loved one is in the hospital, nursing home, and so on.

By the way, something new on that front: the Pastoral Services Department at Westmoreland Hospital in Greensburg used to call when one of us was in the hospital. Not any more. I was told that all phone calls to one of the three Excelsa Health hospitals (Frick, Latrobe

and Westmoreland) go to a central switchboard, where an operator takes the call. The operators have a computer that gives them patient information. That might be a more efficient, cost-effective system that eliminates the need for volunteers to call pastors of churches, but that is just it. We pastors are more reliant on you, the people to let us know. Please do that!

Studies have shown that people who are active in a faith community – church, synagogue, and so on – and have a spiritual life and know that other people are praying for them, have a more positive outlook and a better recovery than those who do not. Also, know that there is healing power in the things of the Church: prayer, Holy Communion, laying on of hands and anointing with oil, and just pastoral presence – do not deny yourself! God has done pretty much what God is going to do in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The rest is up to us, God's people, to do God's work in the world. Let us bring God's healing power to you.

Since You Asked

If you are wondering what the letters “STS” are for after my name, they are for *Societas Trinitatis Sanctae*, which is the Latin for “Society of the Holy Trinity”. “The Society is a ministerium (order) of pastors who have been ordained in Lutheran churches throughout North America and Australia. In a time of doctrinal confusion and moral uncertainty, we support one another in remaining faithful to the promises spoken at ordination into the Church's ministry.” That is from the home page of the Society's website, and you can read the rest of it for yourself at www.societyholyltrinity.org

Theoretically, the Society is open to all ordained ministers in the Lutheran Church around the world. Practically, nearly all of the well-over 200, nearly 300 Society members are in the United States and Canada. Some pastors bring their spouses to retreats; and there is one woman who has a special exemption to come, but really, the Society is for ordained ministers.

The idea is simply this: to help its members be better pastors. We do this by supporting each other in our ministries, by gathering for the general retreat and chapter retreats several times a year, pastoral visits to each other, and our own devotions, which are to include keeping the “liturgical hours” of the day, especially Morning Prayer (*Matins*) and Evening Prayer (*Vespers*), and perhaps also Prayer at the Close of the Day (*Compline*) and some of the others throughout the day. It is a bit demanding to do all that, but worth it to have a well-developed prayer and spiritual life. It also helps keep me centered and focused on what I should be doing.

Perhaps more to the point, I have known since I went to my first retreat nearly five years ago that these are the people that I want to be involved with: like-minded, serious about pastoral ministry; people who take the Scriptures, Creeds and Lutheran Confessions seriously, and also the Great Tradition of the Church's worship of God, but without being extreme. Joining the Society is among the best things I have done. I hope that you have noticed the difference in me the last few years. As of this writing, I am looking forward to the Society's General Retreat next week. May God bless the Society and its members and their ministries!

At the Other End of the Spectrum

At the other end of the spectrum from pastors who are trying to live out their lives faithfully and answer the calling that God has made of them to the best of their ability, are pastors who have

lost their faith and become skeptics or agnostics; some have even renounced their faith and have become atheists. On the one hand, there is nothing new about this, while on the other hand, there have been several of these stories in the news lately. National Public Radio had a story a few months ago about a Methodist pastor in Florida who became an atheist. A few weeks ago, I read the online version of an article from the New York Times Magazine about a Pentecostal pastor in Louisiana that became an atheist. I just read today (September 18) about a pastor, the daughter of an ELCA bishop at that, who renounced her faith. Her father, the former bishop of a synod in California, had also renounced the faith, after retiring. That article appeared in Forum Letter, a newsletter I get from *The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau*. Richard Johnson, the editor, STS member and pastor of a church in California, wrote about attending the retired bishop's funeral: held in an Episcopal church, but no hymns, prayers, scripture readings, sermon as such, just some memories shared and the singing of John Lennon's *Imagine*. As in imagine a world without religion, God, heaven, hell, and so on. Johnson described the feeling he got from this as "pretty empty"; I'm sure it was. My point is that it seems to be becoming more of an issue.

What is going on? I can only guess. Again, this is not new; pastors and very involved lay people often "retire" from church after they retire. They have burned themselves out and want to step back. However, it seems to be in the news a lot more; and there seems to have been a shift. Secularists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics and so on are much more vocal these days. There is also more anger, more of an edge. This is not just true of religion, but politics and other areas as well. People are less willing all the time to agree to disagree. The other side is wrong. They are bad people, ignorant, bigoted, etc. Like politics in this country, the scene is getting ugly.

It is becoming more acceptable all the time to mock religion and dismiss people's faith. There is an article in today's (September 20) Tribune-Review about a speaker at an event at St. Vincent College in Latrobe who addressed exactly this issue. This speaker's main point had to do with the current controversy created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act - "Obamacare" - that provides for contraceptives, including abortion inducing drugs, and even abortions that must be included in the health insurance provided by employers. The issue is requiring those employers who object because of the teachings of their religion, like the Roman Catholic Church. Those who object see it as a matter of religious freedom. Those who support the law as written do not see the basis of the objection, but see it as a matter of personal choice. See why we are having such an issue over this and other issues?

Where does this all end? I do not know. I do know this: people have been saying for a long time that Jesus could come at any time. I say, now would be good!

Changes

I have been reading a book, the third in a series of three books by Taylor Branch, At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968. It is about Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights movement, and the politics of the era, especially having to do with the war in Vietnam. I have also read the other two books, Parting the Waters and Pillar of Fire. It is amazing to read about what this country was like, what was going on then, and what our country is like now and what is going on. The response to the civil rights demonstrations, not just in the South, but in northern cities like Chicago, is astounding. The politics and all the behind the scenes stuff, not

just with the civil rights movement, but with the Vietnam war is also astounding. This country has changed a great deal in many ways; and yet, matters of race and the legacy of slavery in this country remain as issues. As much as we have learned about how to fight a war against insurgents – both with and without outside support to them – the more we beat them down, the more determined they are to resist, and the easier it gets for them to recruit new fighters.

Just this morning, I read about how the US Supreme Court struck down the laws of sixteen states having to do with inter-racial marriage. That was in June 1967. Today, we hardly think of it. We see more inter-racial couples all the time and their biracial, multiracial children, and it has stopped being a big deal. Branch's comment was that who would have thought that 40, 50 years later nobody would think of mixed race couples as any big deal, and that same-sex marriage would be the issue that it is? In 1967, nobody, that's who!

Last time, I wrote about how in the upcoming election, we have the clearest choices between candidates in a long time. President Obama and Governor Romney have what is best for this country in mind, but very different visions for what that is and how to bring that about. Among the issues is same-sex marriage. Here is my latest thinking on this: On the one hand, does anyone really want to deny gays and lesbians visitation rights or inheritance rights with their same-sex partners? I don't. While on the other hand, do we, as Christians, really want to redefine marriage from what we have always taught, which is based on Genesis 2, where God creates the man, Adam and then the woman, Eve with the idea that they are partners for each other. I don't.

But it appears that on the level of civil law, same-sex marriage is going to be the law of the land everywhere in this country, sooner or later. Probably later. The states that have same-sex marriage - "marriage equality" as GLBTQ activists call it (that is Gay, Lesbian, Transgender / Transsexual, Queer / Questioning [and I think there is another "Q" as well]) – have it because the courts or state legislatures have imposed it. However, when it has gone to the voters, it has been defeated, and over 30 states have amended their constitutions to uphold the definition of traditional marriage and not allow same-sex marriage. That is how it stands now.

Still, why not make marriage completely a matter of civil law and get the churches and everyone else out of it? That way, everyone that wants to get married gets a civil union, and the people that want to have their marriage blessed by the church can have that. The liberal churches that want to bless same-sex relationships can do that, and the conservative churches that do not want to bless same-sex relationships do not have to. Oh, but I am expecting people to be reasonable about this. I forgot that we no longer live in an age of reason! Let us hope and pray that the cooler heads can prevail, that moderate voices can be heard, and that a workable solution to this issue can be reached.

The Last Word

As always, I have found plenty to say on these pages. As September ends and October comes on and we get busier and busier, I hope that we can continue to journey together in this place and find ways to make Christ known, serving the Lord Jesus in Word and Sacrament and Service.

Pastor Matt Stabe
mstabe@zoominternet.net

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH STAFF:

Pastor: The Reverend Matthew Casey Stabe, STS

Council Members: *President* – Rev. Matthew Stabe, *Vice-President* – Red Kamer, *Secretary* – Dee Graft, Cathy Depta, Charlie Ellis, Linda Keefer, Sue Kotecki, Cheryl Myers, Brent Shallenberger, Joel Suter, Don Ulery, Jim Young, Becky Zito

Church Treasurer – Brenda Suter *Church Financial Secretary* – Cathy Depta

Church Secretary – Cheryl Mains *Organists* – G. Carole Hunker & Nancy McNally
Janitors – Dale & Cheryl Myers

Office Phone Number – 724-887-6526 *Parsonage Phone Number* – 724-887-7962
Church email address – stpauls15683@live.com

Communion Assistants & Counters: October – Linda Keefer, November – Dee Graft, December – Charlie Ellis

Prayer List as of September 23 – Delores Bennett, Annie Eannotti, Gerald Peterson, Betty Shirer, Elsie Kromer, Beverly Winston, Betty Rolla, Dick Echard, Betty Neubauer, Donna Cross, Gladys Clegg, Brian Duffield, Brylie Craun, Kelsey Burger, Byron Kelly, Andrew Laird, Liberty Hernley, Marilyn Seighman, Jean Leonard, Jerry Younkin, Alex Zuzak, Doris Keefer, Pauline Sillaman, Alice Rugg, Wes Lindner, Eleanor Hess, Myron Chappell, Millard Hess, Michelle Marquis, Doris Dillon, France Denham, George Bowman, Ward Miller, Mabel Rolla, John Depta, Jack Connors, Sara Suter, Betty Smith, Donna Lyons, Kathy Miller

For those in the military – Amber Baughman

October Birthdays – 1 – Andrew Dougherty IV, Lucille Rolla; 6 – Tiana Baughman, Erica Davis; 9 – Terri Cramer, Scott Rollinson; 10 – Brady Butts; 12 – Patricia Pluck; 13 – Richard Kauffman; 14 – Jacqueline Younkin; 15 – Russell Kotecki, Vicki Ulery; 16 – Amanda Myers; 17 – Arthur Kolar, Jr.; 20 – Dee Graft, Marlissa Dwyer, Brent Shallenberger; 21 – Peg Cole, Samuel Ellenberger; 22 – Carol Kelly; 23 – Frances Echard, Linda Keefer; 24 – David Brown; 25 – Beth Shallenberger; 26 – Jaime Ellenberger, Amy Jo Rollinson; 28 – Ashtyn Jo Younkin; 29 – Katie Walter; 30 – Sydney Beranek

October Anniversaries – 2 – Roger & Martha Luppold; 4 – Arron & Melissa Malcolm; 7 – David & Barbara Lynn, Stephen & Brittanie Egan; 14 – Brent & Melissa Mains; 15 – Russell & Nicole Kotecki; 18 – John & Cathy Depta; 19 – Steven & Kelly Keno; 24 – Mike & Erica Davis; 28 – Donald & Vicki Ulery

THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING IS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 28. PLEASE CHECK THE BULLETIN FOR MORE INFORMATION.

HAPPENINGS AT ST. PAUL'S:

Congratulations to Kaitlyn Depta on being crowned the 2012 Fall Festival Queen.

Thank you to everyone that helped with the Hearts & Hands Quilt Guild Quilt Show on September 21 & 22.

Mark Polcha is back in school and he's address is as follows: Mark Polcha, Box 912, 6001 University Blvd., Moon Township, PA.

Do you have the gift of Financial Responsibility? The Scottdale Area Association of Churches (SAAC) is looking for a new Treasurer. Duties include maintaining records, writing checks, making deposits, attending Association meetings to make reports. Is this something you could do? You could contribute something to God's work in the community through SAAC. Contact Pastor Matt, Charles Shenk, or another of the participating pastors in the SAAC.

Bethesda Children's Home is having a capital campaign to raise money to build an addition to an existing building, completely redo their kitchen and dining facility, and make some other improvements to their dormitories. Council has committed to giving \$1,000.00 per year for the next three years to support the campaign, beginning September 1, 2012. Watch for things that we will do to help collect those funds, or just designate your gift and include it with your offering. You can also go to Bethesda website at www.bethesda-home.org. Thank you for your support!

Our Annual Calendar Party will be held on Wednesday, October 17 at 6:30 PM. Again this year, we are asking for donations of bagged candy (miniature size candy bars, Hershey kisses, etc.) and desserts. There is a signup sheet on the bulletin board in the upper narthex. This year's proceeds will be going to the Scottdale Association of Churches Food Pantry.

SPY KIDS! It's a Halloween Pizza Party! The October meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 24 (please note the change of date) at 6:00 PM. Come in your costume ready for fun, games and pizza! For an extra SPY buck, your October clue is: It's almost Thanksmas Day!! What Thanksmas Day you say?? Well it is between Thanksgiving and Christmas, That's why we called it Thanksmas. We want to make life a little brighter; And some neighbor's load a little lighter. So bring a can or two, check out the bulletin – pick something from there, Let's get to work to show our neighbors we really do care.

It is that time of year that we are asking for donations for several things. First, we will once again be doing the Thanksmas boxes. These boxes are distributed to 30 families in the area (if you know of someone who is in need of a box, please let Pastor Matt, Sue Kotecki or Cheryl Mains know). The pickup date for the boxes will be on Saturday, December 1. We are asking for the following donations: cans of green beans, corn, peas, cranberry sauce and medium size cans of sweet potatoes, packages of noodles and boxes of stuffing mix and hot chocolate. There is a box in the lower narthex for your donations. **And second,** Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Southwest PA Chapter #300723 is asking for donations of socks, underwear and new toys for children birth to age 18 for the Westmoreland County Children's Bureau. Donations can be put in the box in the lower narthex and will be accepted until December 7.

SERVING ST. PAUL'S

<u>OCTOBER 7</u>	<u>(HOLY COMMUNION)</u>	<u>ALTAR FLOWERS</u>
Greeters	Cathy & Kaitlyn Depta	Walt & Sue Kotecki
Acolyte	Jaime Ellenberger	
Lay Reader	Walt Kotecki	
Ushers - Team #1 –	Charlie Ellis, Duane Stamm, Gail Brown & Dee Graft	
Worship Assistant	Linda Keefer	

<u>OCTOBER 14</u>	<u>(SERVICE OF THE WORD)</u>	<u>ALTAR FLOWERS</u>
Greeters	Walt & Sue Kotecki	Roger & Martha
Acolyte	Skylar Rudberg	Luppold
Lay Reader	Jim Young	
Ushers - Team #2 –	Cheryl Mains, Larry Mains, Debbie Miller & Jerry Rolla	

<u>OCTOBER 21</u>	<u>(HOLY COMMUNION)</u>	<u>ALTAR FLOWERS</u>
Greeters	The Tomasello Family	Larry & Cheryl Mains
Acolyte	Logan Depta	Nancy Myers &
Lay Reader	Beth Shallenberger	Frances Sherman
Ushers - Team #3 -	Ginny Black, Howard & Linda Keefer & Virginia Ridenour	
Worship Assistant	Brent Shallenberger	

<u>OCTOBER 28</u>	<u>(HOLY COMMUNION/REFORMATION SUNDAY)</u>	<u>ALTAR FLOWERS</u>
Greeters	Debbie Miller, Haley & Tyler Rollinson	Graft Family
Acolyte	Logan Mutnansky	
Lay Reader	Doris Butts	
Ushers -Team #4 –	Cheryl Myers, Dale Myers, Nancy Myers & Cathy Depta	
Worship Assistant	Beth Shallenberger	

<u>COMMUNION ASSISTANT</u>	<u>COUNTERS</u>
Linda Keefer	Linda & Howard Keefer

ALTAR CARE – Brent & Beth Shallenberger

If you are unable to serve, please let Pastor Matt or Cheryl Mains know as soon as possible.

October 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Dartball (H) Bryan 7:00	2 Council Meeting 7:00	3 Lutheran Clergy Cluster 10-Noon	4 Bible Study 7:00	5	6
7 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Holy Communion 10:15	8 Dartball (A) Church of Christ 7:00	9 WELCA 7:00	10 Lutheran Clergy Cluster 10-Noon	11 Bible Study 7:00 Hearts & Hands Quilt Guild 7:00	12	13
14 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Service of the Word 10:15	15 Dartball (A) Alverton 7:00	16	17 Lutheran Clergy Cluster 10-Noon Calendar Party 6:30	18 Bible Study 7:00	19 Scrapbooking 6:00	20
21 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Holy Communion 10:15	22 Dartball (A) TUMC 7:00	23	24 Lutheran Clergy Cluster 10-Noon SPY KIDS 6:00	25 Bible Study 7:00	26 Graft/Comerford Rehearsal	27 Graft/Comerford Wedding
28 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Holy Communion 10:15	29 Dartball (A) CUMC 7:00	30	31 Lutheran Clergy Cluster 10-Noon			