

The Epistle

Volume 22 Issue 1

January 2023



The Church's Great Recession

I'm not an economist by any means, so I likely don't know the entirety of the events or fullness of terms I'm about to offer – but that's never stopped me before. If you paid any attention to what was happening in the late aughts you picked up a few things. Terms like too-big-to-fail, subprime, housing bubble, mortgage-backed securities, stress test, and of course: Great Recession. As a layman's refresher the Great Recession (not a Biblical event - as one of our youth members supposed last year) was a series of dominos that fell causing a number of financial and commercial enterprises to fail or need (one more phrase) a bailout to survive. Some of which seemed implausible if not impossible...but we haven't seen a new Pontiac on the road since.

While the great recession was difficult for church cheque-books, it didn't really affect the substance or way of church itself. Ironically, the Church has been a beacon and presence whose role has typically been increased during times of hardship. Through wars, economic disasters, natural disasters the Church has been there to do what the church does and, in those moments, many churches even thrived.

...Until

Until sometime in late 2019 when a SARS virus started to journey around the world and churches faced a challenge they had never faced before. In good times and bad, the Church had been the Church. None of the previous catastrophes the church had endured had prepared it for this. And much like the commercial enterprises of the late aughts, not everyone is going to make it – and it's got nothing to do with money.

Most churches programmatically have been "back to normal" for months if not longer now. Some churches have bounced back. Some have found a new normal. But lamentations are raised from my colleagues and institutional studies alike. Many church leaders assumed they would bounce back as they were, yet as we round the corner into a new year, many churches are coming to terms with the bleak realization that their diminishment during the pandemic hasn't receded. Some, an increasing some, of our fellow workers in Christ have discerned that their time together has drawn to a close and are closing down.

Its one thing for a for a church to be financially poorer than it once was but, as we found out during the first Great Recession, that doesn't mean the Gospel work

...so in Christ we,
though many,

FORM ONE BODY,
and each member
belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:5, NIV

is halted. It's another thing for the church to lose its greatest asset: people. That changes everything. I'm happy to say that St. Paul seems blessed to be bouncing back or maybe at least into a new normal...time will tell. Our worship attendance was up 34% over the last year from the previous. God is still calling us to continue here as Church together.

On January 22nd (the day of our annual meeting) worship will focus on stewardship. For some that word sounds like a churchy way to say "money," but I think we've learned as a Church just how holistic stewardship is and needs to be for Church to thrive. Stewardship is about giving back, to God and to the work of the Church, those things that come from God. Yes, sometimes this means money but just as importantly it's about those other parts of us we have to offer: our hands for altar guild, our voices to teach Sunday School, time to prepare a Circle of Friends meal, our hearts open and our spirits raised together in worship.

The churches closing won't get to do these things together anymore. But thanks be to God and by God's grace, we here have been given the opportunity to survive the Church's Great Recession. Let us be great stewards of this gift.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Tony



Church council did not meet in December

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS



A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who donated toward the Christmas baskets and who gave of their time to shop, pack, and transport them. We donated 70 bags of food, enough for 35 families. The people at Rock Forge tell us that their clientele is mostly seniors, and they are greatly appreciative of our donations.



Christian Formation

Sunday School Classes for:

Young children (preschool—grade 1) Sunday School, every Sunday in the nursery room

Older children (grade 2 and up) Sunday School, 2nd and 4th Sundays in the fellowship hall

Adult study of the Gospel of Matthew, every Sunday except the 2nd Sunday, in the lounge



Poor Joseph has no lines in the Bible

Our wonderful children presenting their Advent pageant

Amelia Marie Stacy was baptized on December 18th



From the Piece Makers



We are happy to report that in 2022 our money raising project netted nearly \$700. We are pleased that many members of St. Paul gifted or decorated their homes with items made by our members. We are to be sending \$300 to help ship quilts to other nations.

Prayers for Healing Sunday



Sunday, January 1st

is the first Sunday of the month
 All who wish may come up to the rail after the service for prayers and anointing.

The January—March issue of *Christ in Our Home* is available now. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please contact the office.



JANUARY — please help!	
Bathrooms	
Kitchen	
Stairwells	
Vacuum and Sweep Upstairs	
Sweep Downstairs	



Dear church family,

Thank you so much for supporting families of young children in our congregation through the Frolic Newsletter program and seasonal resources y'all equip us with! Each month I get an email geared toward Charlie's age and development with ways to incorporate Bible stories and faith into our lives in a really natural way (like connecting Christmas lights to remembering that Jesus is the Light of the world). And as much as it supports Charlie (and Alice, because she is always up for an adventure with her brother), it also gives Ben and me helpful ways to think about the intersection of our faith and parenting. This month there was a connection between the experience of the Hebrew people in the wilderness, exploring the freedom they had in God and the guidance they still needed as they figured out what it all meant (which sometimes involved crying and gnashing of teeth). Yep, that's the life of a two year old!

It makes a difference to our family and I'm really grateful that you give families of young children this gift. Thank you!

Courtney Erzkus (& Ben, Alice, and Charlie)



Kroger Community Rewards

Did you that you can support St. Paul Lutheran Church just by shopping at Kroger? We receive funds through the Kroger Community Rewards program. It does not cost the you anything extra.

You need to have a Kroger Plus card (the one you swipe at checkout to receive rewards and coupons).

You also need to have a digital Kroger account (one that you sign in to with a user name and password).

To sign up, go to krogercommunityrewards.com and sign in. The link to Community Rewards comes up on the first page.

You can also sign up on the Kroger app. Click on the menu (three parallel lines in upper right corner), click on "Rewards," and then click on "Community Rewards".

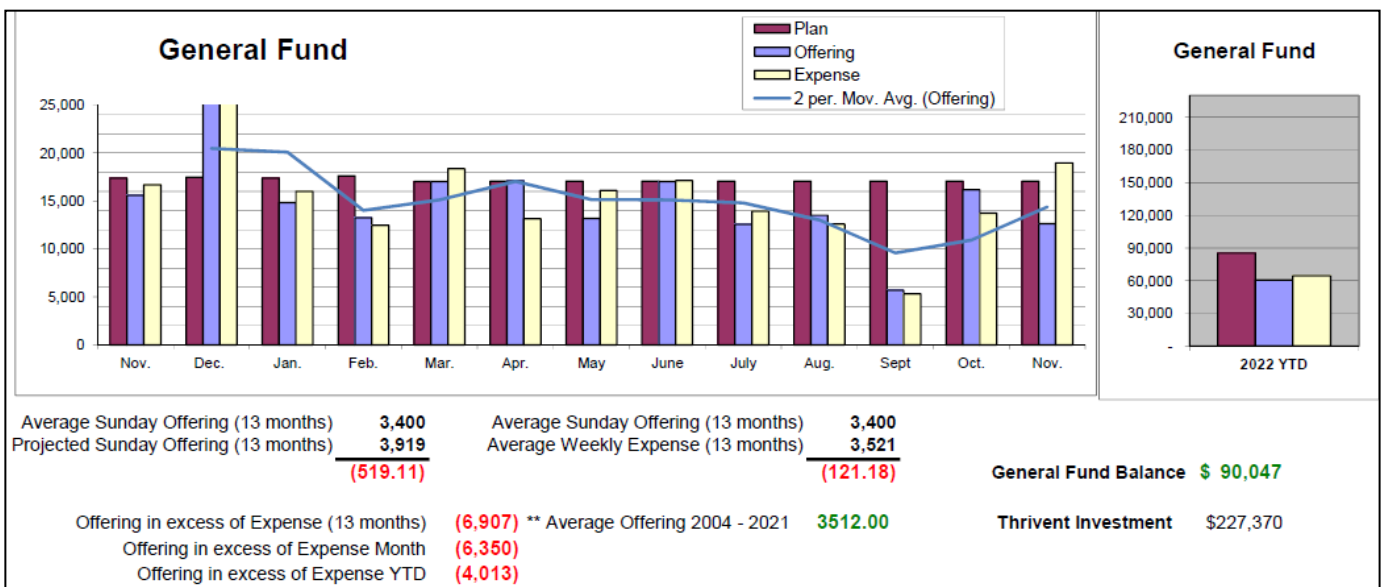
Reminder: please remember to give a check to the church for the ELCA Good Gifts that you ordered. We will write one large check and send in the donation from the congregation. If you took an ornament and sent money individually online, please let us know.



Online Offering: You can give securely online at your convenience with a debit/credit card or checking account.

Visit www.stpaulmorgantown.org/giving.

Thank you!



ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation is scheduled for **Sunday, January 22nd** immediately following worship

Committee chairs: please submit your reports to the office by January 16th

Council members will be elected. Please prayerfully consider accepting a nomination if you are asked. This is your church, and your participation is vital.

Our constitution states that voting members must have a communion of record and a financial contribution of record within the current or preceding calendar year. To maintain your status as a voting member, please fill out a communion card when you next attend worship.

RECORD OF
Communion

Name _____
Address _____
Date _____
 I desire a pastor to call I am a visitor
Home congregation _____
Address _____

Please place this card with the offering or hand it to an usher.

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Removal of the Greens



Come help “un-decorate”
Sunday, January 8th, after the service

Serving in



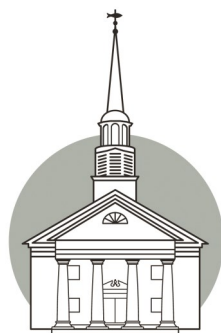
SERVING ST PAUL January 2023	LAY ASSISTANT	LECTOR	USHERS	ACOLYTES	COUNTERS	ZOOM
1st 10:00 AM The Name of Jesus	J. Lemasters	T. Riegel	T. Riegel	S. Setley	K. Shockley C. Henry	Peters
8th 10:00 AM Epiphany	S. McEwuen	S. Grimm	W. Graham	S. Setley	D. Stiles J. Sandolfini	S. Setley
15th 10:00 AM Baptism of Our Lord	M. Sampson	S. Kirkpatrick	S. McEwuen	Sandolfini	W. Graham J. Bouquot	M. Boroff
22nd 4:00 PM	M. Grimm	S. McEwuen	L. Springer	E. Naumann	M. Boroff L. Naumann	Peters
29th 7:00 PM	M. Haas	M. Boroff	D. Custer	Sandolfini	S. Kirkpatrick J. Seasholtz	C. Wertz

Reminder: Deadline for February newsletter is January 23rd!!!



JANUARY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 10:00 AM Worship Service	2	3	4	5	6 10:00 AM Piecemakers	7
8 9:00 AM Choir & All Chil- dren's Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service Take down decorations after the service	9	10 8:15 AM Prayerful Walkers 10:00 AM Bible Study	11	12	13 10:00 AM Piecemakers	14
15 9:00 AM Choir, Young Chil- dren's, & Adult Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service	16	17 8:15 AM Prayerful Walkers 10:00 AM Bible Study	18	19 7:00 PM Council	20 10:00 AM Piecemakers	21
22 9:00 AM Choir, All Chil- dren's, and Adult Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service Annual Meeting after worship 3:30 PM Circle of Friends	23	24 8:15 AM Prayerful Walkers 10:00 AM Bible Study	25	26	27 10:00 AM Piecemakers	28
29 9:00 AM Choir, Young Chil- dren's, & Adult Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service	30 8:00 AM Lutheran Men in Mission	31 8:15 AM Prayerful Walkers 10:00 AM Bible Study				



St. Paul Lutheran Church

MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA
FOUNDED 1897

The **Epistle** is a publication from:
 St. Paul Lutheran Church,
 Morgantown, WV
 The Rev. Tony Setley, pastor
 Church Office Hours:
 Monday -Thursday 9 AM—Noon
 Telephone: (304) 599-0620

Pastor's Office Hours:
 Tuesday — Thursday 10am - 12pm
 Pastor's office phone: (304) 212-5116
 Pastor's cell (text or call): 681-209-6192
 Email: pastor@stpaulmorgantown.org

Officers Of The Congregation
 President: Joanne Seasholtz
 Vice President: Lindsey Naumann
 Secretary: Mary Haas
 Treasurer: Steve Woodruff
 Financial Secretary: Jeanne Lemasters

Council Members

Mary Haas	Grethe Myles	Carol Henry
Lindsey Naumann	Steve Woodruff	Joanne Seasholtz
Julie Sandolfini	Jerry Bouquot	Mike Peters