

The Spirit of St. Paul's

www.stpaulslutheran.ca

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN



Pastor's Corner

I was given my great-grandfather's wind-up gramophone 78 RPM record player and I recently set it up and played it. As I listened to the music (and loud crackle sounds!) I reflected on how much things have changed over the last century and how quickly things continue to change today. Instead of hand cranking a gramophone that will play a record with one song on it, I have access to 70 million songs with the touch of my fingertip on my smartphone. Further, I can wirelessly stream these songs through a speaker with a sound quality that resembles hearing the musicians live.

I find it fascinating when I talk with my 96-year-old grandmother who shares her childhood memories of living with no electricity and travelling for the most part with a horse and carriage. Today we fly on planes while watching movies and drive vehicles that are connected to satellites in space. Soon these vehicles will be driving themselves. There is a lot of benefit to these changes, but at the same time it can be very unsettling and daunting. We have experienced a lot of change in our lives over the last year with the pandemic and there is still a lot of uncertainty over what changes remain.

In Holy Scripture God has revealed to us some of His attributes that help us to better understand who He is and how He relates to us.

This donation is "for the birds"

Not being able to get out as much as usual, Les Hollinger was looking for something to do. The Village where he lives has a well-supplied woodshop so he put it to good use. Having built birdhouses with a theme on previous occasions, he decided to make one in the shape of a church to be put in a tree at St. Paul's. This one is a "duplex" with an entrance at each end. And it opens at the bottom to clear out the old nests in the fall in anticipation of new spring occupants. It reminds one of the oldest church in Saskatchewan at Stanley Mission and many other rural churches. Thanks, Les!



We learn in the Bible that God is good (Psalm 145:9); He is gracious (Psalm 116:5); He is faithful (1 Timothy 2:13); He is eternal (Psalm 90:2); He is almighty and all-powerful (Matthew 19:26); He is all-knowing (Psalm 139:1-4); He is holy (Isaiah 6:3); God is love (1 John 4:8). One of God's attributes that I find especially comforting is that His nature, being, and promises do not change (Malachi 3:6). In the

letter to the Hebrews we learn that Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8). In the midst of all of the changes happening in this world, and in our lives personally, God and His gift of salvation remains sure and constant. The One who changest not abides with you and always will.

*God's blessings,
Pastor Keith*

Reminders

- Please remember that, because we have a number of members with allergies to nuts, any foods brought to church events should be nut-free.

- Also, several have allergies to fragrances. Please consider them when choosing toiletries and whether or not to wear perfumes.

- LWMLC mites and offerings will eventually be collected the first Sunday of each month when we all return to worship in our church building. For now you may include your mites with your congregational offering but as a separate cheque clearly marked as LWMLC mites.

Classifieds

Something to sell or give away? Need something? Services to offer to fellow members? Try The Spirit Classifieds first. No cost. Leave your ads at the church office or give them to the editor.



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God is a God of miracles

By definition a miracle is “an event that so overrides what observers understand of natural law that it creates wonder and serves as evidence of God’s active intervention in this universe.” (*The Global Concise Bible Dictionary*)

Some of the miracles we are most familiar with from the Old Testament are those performed by Moses at the times of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 7 -14). Or we may think of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, when Elijah asked for bread and her food rations were extremely low, yet she did as he asked and God provided a continuous supply of oil and flour so she did not run out. Then her son fell ill and died an Elijah prayed and the boy returned to life (1 Kings 17:8-24). I have read that Elijah and Elisha performed 21 reported miracles.

In the New Testament we marvel at Mary’s virgin conception. In Jesus’ ministry we are in awe of His many miracles, changing water into wine, healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead and many other recorded miracles. We are told He gave power to His disciples to perform miracles as well.

Easter is once more upon us and we are reminded of the greatest miracle of all, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. Our Redeemer lives and as He lives so shall all those who believe in Him and what He has done for us on the cross. Our debt is paid, we are set free.

God is a God of miracles, He is all-powerful and He can, and has, and will act in our world of time and space.

I have shared a quick glance of the major miracles of our God, but

what about God’s small miracles, the ones we experience in our everyday lives—those times when we may be in a difficult spot or come up against obstacles beyond our control—those times when we find an answer to our dilemma and we can’t help but have in the moment, a feeling of sincere thankfulness to God that our situation has been resolved. Do you view it as a small miracle or a coincidence?

I share one such moment that I experienced. Many of you may know that, as part of the work I do for the Board of Evangelism, I send out Easter and Christmas cards to shut-ins, new members and those who may need encouragement in their personal or faith life. This Easter I went out to purchase my cards, well in advance I thought, and discovered my supplier was sold out of Easter cards. They offered to order more in. Fine I could wait. A couple of days later I received a call—sorry they could not fill my order on time.

A still, small voice in my head suggested I check out the cards I have on hand to see if there might be anything suitable I could use. First thought—no way, I need 62 cards. I checked and to my astonishment I came up with 82 cards that were possibilities and 64 that were more appropriate. I had a few Easter cards from previous years, a larger number of blank cards with Scripture verses inside, a number of “praying for you” or “thinking of you.”

This was my moment—I could make this work; thank you, God. I will let you decide: is this a coincidence or a miracle? I know my choice.

Clara Zirk for the Board of Evangelism

Stewardship

Our Father in heaven sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour. His atoning sacrifice is the first fruits of all the dead, a pleasing aroma to His Father, so that His perfect life and death count for all who believe in Him. He claimed us as His own children in Holy Baptism. He sustains and strengthens our faith with His Holy Word and His Body and Blood.

As new creatures, who have put on Christ, we bear good fruit. We do the good works prepared for us, which He makes known to us in His Word. By faith then, trusting in the Word of God, we do what He says because He does not lie and always keeps His promises. For “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

And so the Lord promises: “Honour the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine” (Prov. 3:9-10). How do we honour the Lord with the wealth God has given us in His generosity? By giving generously to those whom the Lord has called us to love and support—our family, our society, and our church. And His promise is that, in so doing, we will never lack.

Here at St. Paul’s we are pleased to report we ended the 2020 year with a surplus of \$6,404 despite the challenges we faced through much of the year with COVID restrictions. With in-person worship services being shut down for several months followed with limitations on numbers of worshippers and other restrictions, we certainly struggled to enhance the ways we were able to continue with our offerings. Thankfully

A common counterpoint is: “But that’s from the Old Testament!” Our Lord Jesus Himself gives us similar promises in the New Testament. He says, at the conclusion of the parable of the talents: “For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance” (Matt. 25:29).

And then at the end of the parable of the dishonest manager, He says: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:10–13).

And in His sermon on the mount, He says: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:19–21).

We have become conditioned against these promises because of

their misuse by the peddlers of the prosperity gospel—the guys on TV who say you get rich by putting God in your debt. And thus, we miss out on the fact that God does reward temporal faithfulness in temporal matters with temporal blessings. It’s no quid pro quo. It’s all from God’s grace and His fatherly divine goodness and mercy. But those Bible passages do in fact say what they say! It’s not the Old Testament’s problem. It’s ours. It is almost as if we have become so jaded against this that we think it a virtue to be stingy with our offerings.

But our Father in heaven still loves to bless those who bless others. He loves to give to those who give freely and generously. In fact, He challenges us to challenge Him: “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. And thereby put Me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need” (Mal. 3:10).

And so, while we don’t give so that we would get, we do receive from the Lord in order to give, and He will bless our giving with more receiving. As St. Paul wrote in Rom. 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”

members made a point of dropping off their offering envelopes or mailed them to the church. They signed up for the monthly pre-authorized remittance (PAR) program of giving or made their offerings through the e-transfer system we set up. The Board of Stewardship made a point of keeping members aware of our financial situation and reminded members to keep up

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Stewardship, continued

their offering commitments. Our expenditures were under budget for the year by about \$31,000 as some programs were deferred or did not get done due to COVID restrictions. Our offerings from all sources were down by approximately \$34,000 compared to 2019 giving. We applied for various subsidy programs that were made available and received \$29,500 from the federal and provincial governments. Without that support we would have ended the year with a deficit of some \$23,000. Our Missions commitment of \$33,000 was met and all payments were remitted. At the end of the year, we had a healthy bank balance of just over \$34,000 to help us into 2021. We thank our members for the support we have received through the challenges we faced. Thanks be to God!

Recently the board received the financial statements to the end of February 2021, which showed we have an operating deficit of \$10,060. Our offerings are down about \$5,000 from the previous year. At the end of February 2020, we had a deficit of \$3,800 so we are behind last year results by about \$6,000. We are still eligible for federal subsidy support in 2021 but the funding formula has changed so we won't be receiving as much this year as we did in 2020. We continue to pray that our members will be able to keep up their support for our programs and ministry to face these challenging times.

God's Blessings this Easter season!
Board of Stewardship

Victory in Jesus! Alleluia!

After weeks of Lenten meditation over the pain and suffering Christ endured on the Cross for the sins of all mankind, past, present and future, we still cannot comprehend the magnitude of His sacrificial love. We can only imagine the hopeless and helpless state of grief the disciples felt the day Christ died. His death had pierced their hearts with sorrow, shattered their hopes and filled their hearts and minds with doubts and fears. Yet, their sorrow was turned to JOY that first Easter morning when they saw the tomb empty and then saw Jesus alive! As we recall the Easter story, we, too, rejoice!

Death, now where is your sting?

Christ Jesus, our Saviour
is victorious

Over death and the grave!
Alleluia! Our God reigns!

Because He lives, we have
confidence in Him.

Because He lives, we can face to-
morrow's challenges.

Because He lives, we, too, will live
beyond the grave.

Rejoice and give God the glory;
Great things He has done. Alleluia.

In all things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ...neither death nor life, angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

On this side of the cross, there is still tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, danger and war all around us. Every day we battle the devil, the world or our own sinful nature. But the difference is that God's everlasting love in Christ will bring us through it all until we reach eternity. It is only with His almighty strength that we can persevere.

We are saved by God's Grace. We've been redeemed. We are now a new creation in Christ. Therefore, we no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15). He lives in us; we are alive in Him. We are the church triumphant, ever going forward in Christ.

May we encourage each other to look to Jesus and trust in His unfailing love. He has called us to be His hands, His feet, His voice wherever and whenever He gives us the opportunity to share His love with the lost and the erring. There is good news! There is hope! There is victory in Jesus! Alleluia!

Choose one of your favourite hymns to sing or ponder over the words. For example, you might choose "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" or "God of Grace and God of Glory."

*by Irene Warpula
Thunder Bay, Ont.*

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