

possible for people of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds and with limited financial means to adopt children. We encourage those who contemplate adopting to consider adopting children with special needs. Mothers and fathers choosing to place their children for adoption should be affirmed and supported in view of society's prejudices against such decisions. (pg. 6)

What is the status of this conversation in our local faith community? What words or phrases seem important to you today? What words challenge you?



Dear Parents,

We would love to work with you to bring your children to communion with Christ when he/she is hungry and curious to know the love of Jesus in this way. We rely on you to present your child to us when he/she expresses the desire to participate in communion with some understanding of why it is significant.

Soon, we will be preparing students to receive First Communion on Maundy Thursday or the Sunday following Easter by gathering with you for a mini-retreat in which we will talk about Christ's presence in the Eucharist, make a personal banner, and bake communion bread as an act of service for the whole community. If you have a child you feel is ready or would like more information, please contact Kaileen Weaver by March 25th at (319) 480-6031 or cyfmstpaulanamosa@gmail.com

Wednesday, February 5th

Ushers: Jim & Eunice Conley
Reader: Beth Hora
Comm Prep: Dorothy Wood
Comm Server: Beth Hora & Summer Parks
PowerPoint: Beth Hora

Sunday, February 9th 8:30 a.m.

Ushers: Merlyn & Marlane Wilken
Reader: Colin Stiffler
Comm Prep: Merlyn & Marlane Wilken
Comm Server: Don & Debbie Hardersen, Colin Stiffler
PowerPoint: Lois Ocenosak
Video: Linda Kenny

Sunday, February 9th 10:30 a.m.

Ushers: Rob Robertson family
Reader: Kristi Robertson
Comm Prep: Dan & Lynn Rickels
Comm Server: Linda Kenny, Dan & Lynn Rickels
PowerPoint: Ruby Robertson
Video: Sebastian Goldsmith

Sunday, February 9th Town Hall Mtgs after services

- * 8:30am Worship
- * 9:30am Coffee Hour
- * 10:30am Worship
- * 12:00pm Adult Initiation Meeting

Monday, February 10th

- * 6:00pm All Leader Meeting—FH
- * 8:00pm Council Meeting—FH

Tuesday, February 11th

- * 1:30pm Prayer (Heart Prayer) — in Prayer Chapel
- * 2:00pm Sisters Ecumenical Study—LL CE
- * 2:30pm R & R - in Prayer Chapel
- * 6:00pm Grief Support—LL CE
- * 6:30pm Mary Circle
- * 8:00pm AA—LL CE

Wednesday, February 12th

- * 7:00am Good Guys Bible Study—McOttos
- * 8:00am Lutheran Men in Mission
- * 6:00pm Worship
- * 6:00pm WD4

Friday, February 14

- * Pulse Deadline

Church Office Hours: Typically church staff are in the building Monday - Friday. **Lois' office hours** are: Mon. & Th 9-2; Tue. 12:30–5:30; Wed. 9-4; Fri 9-12. Outside these hours call ahead to see if someone is here.

St. Paul Phone: (319)462-4841
 Office: 103 E. Cedar Street, Anamosa, IA 52205
 Website: www.stpaulanamosa.com
 Church Secretary email: stpaulanamosa@gmail.com

Wednesday, February 12th

Ushers: Ken & Pam Humpal
Reader: Beth Hora
Comm Prep: Ken & Pam Humpal
Comm Server: Marge Bohlken, Beth Hora
PowerPoint: Beth Hora

Sunday, February 16th 8:30 a.m.

Ushers: Don & Deb Hardersen
Reader: Don or Deb Hardersen
Comm Prep: Dee Ihlenfeldt
Comm Server: Conor Fortune, Brian & Michele Lubben
PowerPoint: Grant Lubben
Video: Grace Lubben

Sunday, February 16th 10:30 a.m.

Ushers: Dan & Marilyn Lambertsen
Reader: Dan or Marilyn Lambertsen
Comm Prep: Amy Christianson
Comm Server: Amy Christianson, Sally Clapp, Addie Dales
PowerPoint: Emma Dales
Video: Logan Dales

Sunday, February 9



5th Sunday post Epiphany

Liturgy setting one can be found on pages 57-74 in the green Lutheran Book of Worship and grape juice. The inner ring of the tray is grape juice. If in doubt, please ask the distributor. Gluten free hosts are available; please notify an usher before service begins.
All Are Welcome to commune with Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We serve the fruit of the vine under two forms: wine

At the beginning of worship you will be invited to turn to another person and complete the statement, "This week, I encountered God...." Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Prayer Concerns: Betty Lubben, Bob Hefflefinger, Leslie Swartz, Loren Lubben, Bobbie Gersdorf, Karen Kleppe, Sharm Sisler. (Names will be removed from the prayer list after four weeks unless there is a change in the person's condition. Requests need to be made by an immediate family member.)

" Love is Kind Dinner"

What: Home cooked meal featuring: Ham Balls, Mashed Potatoes, Rolls, Green Beans and Pie

When: February 16, 2020 Time: 4:30pm

Place: St. Paul Fellowship Hall

Why: Because we Love you! We hope you can join us for this evening of fellowship.

Please RSVP on the sign-up sheet or to the church office by February 10th (319) 462-4841

Lenten meals are starting again March 4, 2020. In the back of the church is a sign up sheet to help and to bring bars or cookies. These meals are something everyone looks forward to yearly but it takes many hands to accomplish them. This is a way to meet others from different church services and members of all ages. High school students who need silver cord hours this is a great opportunity just bring your sheet with you. Thank you so much to all of you who step up every time I call.

The Super Bowl Sub Fundraiser was a great success with the support of all our church family. A big thanks goes out to the Thrivent Action team for their support, Marcy Pate, Sally Clapp, Michele Lubben and all the mission trip members and their parents.

Lutheran Disaster Response blog and updates

The Lutheran Disaster Response blog provides updates on the church's response to disasters in the United States and around the world. You can read the Lutheran Disaster Response blog at blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse.

Town Hall Meetings today after services for a congregational open discussion on the life, vision and mission of St. Paul Church.

Interviews to be Conducted

The church council has been meeting with Pastor Erika Uthe of the Southeast Iowa Synod. She is the director for evangelical mission. Pastor Erika works with congregations in helping them find the best ways for fulfilling their mission of sharing the Good News. She instructed the council on techniques that can be used for receiving input from congregational members. As a follow-up to the table talks that were held last year, it was determined that individual interviews would be a good way of receiving additional input. Ten individuals have been trained in the interviewing process. Our goal is to interview approximately 100 members. During the next 8 weeks, you may be receiving a call from an interviewer, wishing to schedule a meeting with you. The interview will be informal and last only 30 to 40 minutes. The following questions will be asked:

Interview Questions

What are the strengths of the St. Paul Community?
 What would you like to see develop at St. Paul over the next three years?

What resources are needed to support that vision/development?

If you do not receive a call and would like to be interviewed, please notify the church office and an interviewer will be happy to call you to schedule a visit. Thank you for your participation in this project.

First Reading: Book of the Prophet Isaiah 58:1-9a {NIV}

The prophets speak for the Lord (Adonai God). In its origin, the word “prophet” meant “to be a mouthpiece for.” In common parlance, we often reduce prophecy to foretelling the future. However, in the Jewish tradition, the prophets just as frequently commented on or interpreted the meaning of the past. And, as Isaiah does in this reading, prophets often tell how God wishes his people to behave in the present.

The opening phrase “Thus says the Lord,” always signals a solemn pronouncement from the mind of God as the prophet understands it. In this case, Isaiah is speaking to the people of Israel after they have returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile, about 538 BCE. It is as if they no longer know how to treat each other or the foreign people they are encountering in their homeland. Non Jews wanted to worship Yahweh, but the Jews were acting bitter and exclusive. We can almost understand this behavior when we realize that for at least two generations in Babylon, the people who returned had scraped and scrimped just to survive. The Jewish leadership was often weak and self-centered, often times hoarding goods for their own clan at the expense of fellow Jews. Isaiah called the people back to covenantal living so that their light would truly shine and their salvation could be celebrated. Isaiah attempted to make clear through an “If...then” pattern of proclamation that their actions indeed effected the world around them. He wanted his fellow Israelites to light fires (stimulate discussion) by challenging selfish behaviors through their joyful fasting. God was calling them; would they respond?

Listen closely to these words as the Hebrew people of Isaiah’s time must have. Hear how simple and practical our response to God’s love must be: if you want to see light in darkness, if you want to know mercy in the face of sinfulness, if you want to have your wounds healed and your prayers heeded, then feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, welcome the foreigner, and identify with the suffering around you each day.

Second Reading: St. Paul’s first letter to the Christian community in Corinth, Greece 2:1-12 NIV

As first century Greeks, the Corinthians fancied philosophical discussion. They would argue issues until the issues no longer held any meaning {we in the West come out of the Greek academic tradition.} And this was Paul’s experience of trying to preach to them. He found through trial and error that he could not convince the Greeks of the power of the cross by arguing with them. He did not have the ability to wax eloquently, as did his Christian colleague Apollos. He simply had to keep telling the story of Christ crucified and let God’s Spirit do the rest.

The image of a savior crucified was a stumbling block to some and pure folly to others. In human terms, there is no way the crucifixion can mean triumph over sin and death. To the people of that time, the crucifixion looked like a terrible failure and defeat; it was an embarrassment. How could another Jew beaten and nailed to a tree be a sign of hope? Only belief in the power of resurrecting love expounds the mystery of the cross. This word “mystery” hints at why it is a stumbling block for so many. A mystery is not to be conclusively understood or grasped intellectually; it is to be experienced, pondered, held, rested with. For those who hanker for certitude, the mystery of the cross will be forever troubling.

Paul did not want to make followers of Christ based solely on his ability to argue well. From experience, he knew that when people’s faith rested on human words or leaders, it was too easy for them to become disenchanted, dismayed, or disenfranchised when that leader’s weaknesses came through, and it always shows through at some point. Paul wanted followers of Jesus who were committed to a life in Holy Spirit not because of lofty, or highly spiritual, moral, or intellectual human words but because they felt and chose God’s power over sin and death. For that reason, Paul spoke humbly, naming his weakness and claiming no status among the people.

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20 NIV

Where and when is the Kingdom of God? In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus tells us without hesitation that it is here and now; “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand” (4:17). His life was spent revealing this reality; and so, those who committed themselves to following Jesus asked: “What does it mean to live in this kingdom of God that is as close as the end of your arm?” Jesus responded by teaching them over a period of years, but for his community and us, Matthew presents these teachings as the tidy Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7).

Today’s gospel presents two images or metaphors that Jesus used to describe the role of God’s disciple/follower in the world. They were to be salt and light. Like the images of Isaiah, the Jews are reminded that their worldly role is to be catalysts for the Kingdom as well as bring flavor, preservation, and light. In Jesus’ time, salt was used to preserve fish and meat, and add flavor to food. As salt, his followers were to improve the quality of human life and to preserve it from destruction, primarily by a continuous reliance on the Law and the Spirit of God. As light, they were to cast away the shadows of doubt and fear and illuminate life with mercy, kindness,

and generosity. The darkness of sin was to be overcome through the law of love. It is silly to think that a follower of Jesus would encounter him and take in his teachings only to hide away. This journey to faith in Jesus is not a private experience. On the contrary, Jesus’ true followers can’t help but shed his light and life upon all in their household; his is a public ministry.

Jesus poses the question, “*But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?*” What would cause salt to lose its flavor except to have its chemical composition changed by the addition of other elements? It is then very difficult to return the compound to its original state and simplicity. Similarly, disciples cannot mix in the teachings or worship of other gods and expect to remain unchanged. If so, Jesus indicates, your effectiveness in the cause will surely wane.

Another cultural insight reveals Jesus’ cleverness in connecting these two images. Most villages in Jesus’ day were made up of extended families and so they shared a common earthen oven for baking and cooking. In the bottom of most ovens, a salt block was placed flat and a dried goat or camel patty (flattened dung mixed with salt) sat atop it. Through chemical reactions, the dung would create heat (this is still a primary fuel source in many nations of the world). The salt slab loses its catalytic qualities over time and then is thrown onto the muddy roads to provide some sure footing in the rainy season. A committed disciple is always useful, whether it is being “salty” and starting the fires that challenge people to change, or providing sure foundation for others during difficult times or providing taste and preservation. Like faithful disciples, salt constantly gives itself away in order to help create these aspects of life.

It is a ridiculous idea to light a lamp and then place it under a basket. It is equally ridiculous to become a follower of Jesus and pretend your life will not reveal the power of God. Followers of Jesus have the ability to make the kingdom of God known to others by being like salt and light.

Taking it to heart

Youth: identify an older person who can provide sure footing for you during these times of change and challenge (grandparent, neighbor, teacher, parish minister). Don’t be afraid to develop a relationship of trust.

Name the people you know who claim to be Christian but spend more time covering it up than revealing it. Can you be “salty” for them?

Now name the people you know whose faith, joy, and love readily flow through their actions. Tell them what that means to you.

Recall a time you were really down and someone unexpectedly stepped in and lifted your spirit. Thank God for that person. If you can, write that person a note.

Instead of dropping your child off at an activity this week, request to spend the time together. Be emotionally available to your family. Take a risk and tell someone you haven’t told in a while, “I love you.” Play a silly simple game as a family: Crazy 8’s, King’s Corners, Chutes and Ladders, Yahtzee, Charades.

Write a heartfelt letter to one of your elected officials.

A Social Statement on: ABORTION [This social teaching statement was adopted by a more than two-thirds majority vote at the second biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, meeting in Orlando, Florida, August 28-September 4, 1991.]

IV. GUIDANCE IN MAKING DECISIONS REGARDING UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES: Because of the Christian presumption to preserve and protect life, this church, in most circumstances, encourages women with unintended pregnancies to continue the pregnancy. Faith and trust in God’s promises has the power to sustain people in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In each set of circumstances, there must also be a realistic assessment of what will be necessary to bear, nurture, and provide for children over the long-term, and what resources are available or need to be provided for this purpose. The needs of children are a constant. The parenting arrangements through which these needs are met may vary. If it is not possible for both parents to raise the child, this might be done by one parent, by the extended family, or by foster or adoptive parents.

This church encourages and seeks to support adoption as a positive option to abortion. Because adoption is an increasingly more open process today, it generally is easier for birth parents to have a role in selecting the adoptive parents and in maintaining some contact with the child. These possibilities can be helpful in the grieving process that is likely to occur when birth parent(s) choose to place the child for adoption after having bonded with the child during pregnancy. Care needs to be taken in selecting adoption processes that do not exploit but safeguard the welfare of all parties involved. At the same time, we recognize that there are unintended pregnancies for which adoption is not an acceptable option. We encourage and seek to make it