



# St. Paul's Epistle

*"To know Christ and to make Christ known"*

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## ST. PAUL'S SEARCH COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED

Your Vestry is DELIGHTED to announce the members of the Search Committee: Allen Wellons (chair), Linda Armstrong, Leo Daughtry, Nancy Gibbs, Joyce Kilpatrick-Jordan, Don Overby (Vestry liaison), and Sherrill Weathers.

The Search Committee will be guided in their work by Catherine Massey, Canon for Transition Ministry for the Diocese. Catherine will help our Search Committee assemble material for the parish profile, a series of questions and answers used by clergy and churches across the country, and help prepare the Committee to interact with candidates who are interested in discerning a possible call to serve St. Paul's.

Once candidates have made known their interest in St. Paul's, the search process will "go dark." The Search Committee will interview candidates, listen to their sermons, and check out their references. You will not hear anything from the Search Committee during this time. The work of the Search Committee ends when the name of the priest they believe will best serve our parish is given to the Vestry, and we won't know that has happened until our next rector is announced by the Vestry. While this "dark" time may seem strange, it is necessary for the clergy who are discerning with the Search Committee—they may not have said anything about their exploration of another call to the parish they are currently serving. Confidentiality matters in the search process. Feel free to ask questions of the Search Committee, but always be willing to accept that they may not be able to answer.

The first task of the Search Committee will be to write a collect for our search. Once it is written, we will make that prayer available to everyone. It will be prayed every Sunday during our worship service, and we ask that you add it to your daily prayers. Pray for the members of the Search Committee as they begin to do their work. The power of your prayers will make a difference as they do their work, and even though we won't know who the clergy are who are discerning with the Search Committee, our prayers matter there, too.

## ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY 17

As with so many things, the coronavirus is limiting what we can do as we prepare for Lent:

no Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers,

no ashes smudged on our foreheads with the powerful words

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

But, we can begin our observance of Lent with worship. Join us for a live-streamed service via Zoom and Facebook Live on Ash Wednesday at 6 p.m.

# FROM THE INTERIM RECTOR: LENT, 40 DAYS, AND MORE

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Of all the seasons of the church year, I think Lent may be the most misunderstood. It's also the one season that many Christians try in some way to "observe," and this is where the misunderstandings abound.

Historically, the season of Lent has been a time to prepare catechumens for baptism at the Easter Vigil and to repair breaches in relationships in the faith community, to give those who, in the words of our Ash Wednesday liturgy, "because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful" an opportunity to be reconciled "through penitence and forgiveness." In the early church, this period of preparation before Easter lasted only a few days; it was later lengthened to the forty days we now observe (which are the weekdays only between Ash Wednesday and Easter; Sundays are always feast days, "mini-Easters" when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection). Forty is an important number in the Bible: it rained on Noah and the ark for forty days and forty nights; Moses and the Israelites spent forty years wandering in the wilderness; Mary carried Jesus in her womb for forty weeks; and Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness.

It is entirely appropriate that we fast before we feast at Easter. Somewhere between the early church and today, I fear we went a bit astray. For many, Lent has become a time of self-denial largely disconnected from the church. We "give up" something because we think we're supposed to deny ourselves something. Just giving up something for the sake of giving it up does not necessarily result in the deepening of our faith, or of our sensing that we are drawing closer to God, becoming a better disciple of Jesus. I've had more than a few Lenten disciplines in which my Lenten discipline was to give up chocolate or alcohol (or one year, both). I always felt virtuous if I maintained my discipline to Easter, and often I opted not to break my discipline on the Sundays in Lent (they are called Sundays in Lent, not Sundays of Lent because they are appropriately not days of Lenten observance). I don't know that those disciplines did much besides puff up my pride, which is, you'll remember, one of the seven deadly sins!

Note that "self-denial" is only one in a list of things we're invited to do in the Ash Wednesday liturgy. Certainly prayer and "reading and meditating on God's holy Word" are more in line with the original intention of Lent, when catechumens were preparing for their baptisms. Sam Portaro, an Episcopal priest and former chaplain at the University of Chicago, points out that the original purpose of Lent, preparing newcomers for initiation in the life of the church and repairing relationships in the community of faith, "was twofold in function but singular in purpose. ...It was, in both dimensions, preparation for companionship, for life in community." He goes on to say, "Lenten disciplines and routines that call us to self-examination and interior meditation only strengthen our tendencies to bear up under life alone, or in silent community with some distant, unseen deity. In a society already fractured and isolated, and among a people hunkered down in individualism, many of our customary spiritual disciplines serve not as preparation for life in community or the healing of our disaffections, but rather as exercise to extend our powers of endurance. So much of what passes for Lenten or other spiritual discipline renders us unfit for human companionship." (*Daysprings: Meditations for the Weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter* [Cambridge: Cowley, 2001], p. 75)

Much of what Jesus did in his brief ministry addressed human companionship: he routinely violated social conventions to be with people whom society deemed unfit; he repeatedly restored people into relationships. And among his last words to his disciples were "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12) Jesus didn't seem too interested in helping people become stronger, more self-reliant individuals; he was more concerned about how God's children interacted with one another. It was less about self and more about community.

I pray that your Lent may be a time of growth, both spiritually and in community, and that this season of preparation and fasting may leave you ready to be changed once again by our celebration of Christ's resurrection at Easter.

Grace and peace, Jill+

# NEWS AND NOTES...

## Financial Reports for December 2020 and Year-end 2020

### December 2020

Total income received: \$20,570

Total income budgeted: \$24,913

Total expenses: \$30,028

Total expenses budgeted: \$24,913

December expenses includes unexpected repairs to the rectory (\$7,348; the monthly amount budgeted for rectory repairs is \$208).

### Year-end 2020

Total income received: \$271,219

Total income budgeted: \$298,950

Total pledges received: \$240,125

Total pledges budgeted: \$258,500

Total expenses: \$286,522

Total expenses budgeted: \$298,950



## January Vestry Highlights

Vestry Meeting actions and updates for January:

- ◆ Observed the Feast of the Conversion of our Patronal Saint, which occurs on January 25 of our liturgical calendar.
- ◆ Received the Finance Committee report for 2020.
- ◆ Approved proceeding with an application through the Payroll Protection Program, a forgivable loan through the federal government to help businesses and organizations facing financial challenges because of the coronavirus. This loan will help address the deficit the parish anticipates during 2021.
- ◆ Elected Gene Johnson to fill the open Vestry position (through December 2023)

## INTERESTED IN BISHOP CURRY'S LATEST BOOK?

Our former diocesan bishop Michael Curry, now Presiding Bishop, has written another fine book: *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*. Bishop Curry has said on numerous occasions, "If it's not about love, it's not about God," and this book is about both love and God.

If you're interested in reading this book and talking about it, let's do a virtual book study, time TBD. We'll set up weekly gatherings on Zoom and ponder Bishop Curry's wisdom and what we're being called to do. Let Jill+ know if you're interested.

## Attendance and Pledge Obligations 2021

Last Week	Year to Date
1/31/2021	1/1/2021 - 2/3/2021
Pledge Payments \$2905.50	Pl. Payments \$13,759.50
Weekly Pledge Target \$4971.15*	Pledge Budget \$24,855.75*

\*Target and budget numbers are based on 2020 budget since no budget has been adopted for 2021.



St. Paul's ECW met in January via Zoom. There were 9 members in attendance. Our October soup sale had a net profit of \$1,085. We were able to donate \$800 to the Salvation Army Angel Tree. We collected \$212 for the United Thank Offering and sent a donation of \$225 to the diocese.

Pat Hovorka has been our wonderful leader, but her time as ECW president has come to an end. We all extend our huge thanks and gratitude for her leadership that has kept the ECW afloat during the pandemic. We've met our diocesan obligations and contributed to our local community in a time when some groups have gone stagnant. Thank you, Pat!

Nancy Gibbs was elected as our new president. In an effort to stay active, raise funds, and nourish our congregation—we have announced the "Take the Chill Off Chili Sale" for February! We are offering a meal deal that includes a quart of Anita Carter's award-winning chicken chili OR our popular taco soup, 4 cornbread muffins, and a sweet surprise. Use the accompanying form to order your \$12 meal deals. Both soups freeze beautifully! Deadline to order is Friday, February 19. Drive through pick-up will be Saturday, February 27 from 11am-1pm. Your soups will not be warm but will be ready to heat up or pop right into your freezer! All proceeds from this fundraiser will be used to support our ongoing projects.

The order form for the Take the Chill Off Chili Sale is enclosed with this newsletter and with the emailed Sunday announcements.

The ECW cookbook is still going to happen, but we cannot publish a cookbook without YOUR recipes! During this period when we all find ourselves with more time at home, ask your families what their favorite dishes are from your family recipe box. Those are the special recipes that we need!

PLEASE continue to submit your recipes for our Cookbook Project either by entering them directly online or by using the enclosed form. We look forward to seeing recipes from any and all who would like to contribute.

To submit a recipe(s) online go to:

<https://www.typonsave.com>.

Enter the login: **stpaulsecw** and the password: **pickle213**

To submit a handwritten recipe, please use the form at the back of this newsletter, then mail to St. Paul's or drop it through the mail slot on the office entry door. Feel free to copy the form for additional submissions.

If you have any questions regarding the cookbook project, please contact any of the following committee members: Nancy Gibbs (committee chair), Pat Hovorka, Theresa Rose, Kay Hewitt, Sherrill Weathers, and Jenny Batten-Wiley.

The Lex Mathews Scholarship applications are due March 15. These scholarships are geared to women of our diocese, age 23 and older, who are seeking either: specialized training in vocational or technical skills, a degree or certification below a master's/doctorate, or continuing education courses for upgrading job skills. Scholarship amounts run between \$500-\$2,000 per academic year. If you would like more information, please contact Nancy Gibbs at [nancygibbs@gmail.com](mailto:nancygibbs@gmail.com) or call her at 919-906-5782.

Next ECW meeting will be via Zoom on Saturday, February 20 at 10am. Meeting link will be sent that week.

## ALTAR FLOWERS IN 2021

The new chart for altar flower donations is now up. If there's a specific Sunday you'd like to provide flowers for the altar, please sign up or call Mike in the office, and he'll add your name to the chart.

## My Kid's Club

The children still appreciate these snacks: fruit, lower sugar or sodium items, and water. Meg Scovil will pick up donated items and deliver them to The Club. Should you wish to donate snacks, simply drop off your donated items on the bench outside the office door on Thursdays during the day and let Mike Hugo know either by phone or email. Mike will bring the donated items inside and then pass the word on to Meg for her to pick up. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry.



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## Sunday Worship Via Internet

Our Zoom link for Sunday morning worship will be posted in our weekly email blast and bulletin. We will not post the link outside parish news due to recent problems with hackers.

Our Facebook link is the home page for the St. Paul's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/St-Pauls-Episcopal-Church-Smithfield-NC-130758673995>. Note: one need not subscribe to Facebook to watch the livestream. Simply choose "not now" if asked about adding an account.



## Stewardship Corner

By now, everyone probably knows that our projected financial outlook for operating our church and its wonderful programs is at risk. You also are probably aware that a 2021 budget has not been finalized; something we usually have completed by the Annual Meeting in December. But, we know that these are not normal times, and we know that there is probably no one who has not been affected by the coronavirus. However, we must do our best to press on and remain faithful and hopeful.

Stewardship and completed and returned pledge cards are needed to project what our services and programs will look like and offer this year. A completed pledge card also affords the opportunity to take somewhat of a census of how we are doing individually and in our family. A completed pledge card should not only reflect what you plan to give, but also it is an opportunity to know what your needs might be and if there is something we can do to assist you. Certainly, for many of us there have been and are times when we would like to give more and, in some cases, give at all. Please use the pledge card as an opportunity to communicate with the church about your circumstance and willingness by way of time, talents, and yes treasure. Let the church leadership know that you are among us. During this time of trial when we do not see each other, I encourage you to be intentional and reach out to others and let them know you have been thinking about them and miss them.

In Bishop Curry's latest book, *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*, he reminds us that as Christians we are believers of the way of Jesus of Nazareth, which is love, but that also includes action and as well as faith.

David Lockett

Co-chair, Stewardship Committee

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*“Together we will grow, serve,  
and nurture again.”*



## St. Paul's Episcopal Church



### Sunday Schedule

**11:00 a.m. Sunday worship live-streamed**

### Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Feb. 16 Finance, **6:00 pm** (Zoom)
- Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday worship, **6:00 pm** (Zoom)
- Feb. 19 Deadline to order Take the Chill Off Chili and Soup
- Feb. 20 ECW, **10:00 am** (Zoom)
- Feb. 23 Vestry, **7:00 pm** (Zoom)
- Feb. 27 Take the Chill Off Chili and Soup pick-up  
**11am—1pm**