



# St. Paul's Epistle

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

## FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN:

Dear People of St. Paul's

While working with a few other ECW members last Saturday handing out pre-ordered "meal deals" curbside at the church while masked up and distanced, I definitely heard a few recurring phrases: "I'm so tired of this stupid virus." "I can't wait for this whole thing to be over." "I'm so looking forward to gathering with my church family again." And I totally agree with them all.

We are living in a most unusual time full of challenges, and St. Paul's of Smithfield is no different. The most pressing challenge we are facing is a shortfall of nearly 25% in our 2021 budget. This financial crisis is as much a threat to the life of St. Paul's as Covid is a threat to the lives of our loved ones.

Please know that if you sent in a pledge card, we are extremely grateful – thank you, thank you, thank you! We now humbly ask the people of St. Paul's to prayerfully consider a pledge increase. What may God be calling me to do in these unusual times? How can I help sustain the livelihood of St. Paul's? A mailing is going out to the entire parish this week that includes a second pledge card AND bookmarks with our parish search prayer so you can pray it between Sundays. Pray for our parish. Pray about how you might be able to help address our financial challenge. Pray for our search committee and their work in seeking our next rector. And pray that with increased availability that we can all get vaccinated.

Hopefully we can all say very soon, "I'm so glad that stupid virus is gone." "I'm so glad it's over." "I'm so happy to be with my church family again."

**"There is always a storm. There is always rain. Some experience it.**

**Some live through it. And others are made from it." — Shannon L. Alder**

Faithfully yours,

Theresa Rose, Sr. Warden

### St. Paul's Search Prayer

Almighty God, you know the needs of your Church in every place: look graciously upon the people of St. Paul's, and grant us the guidance of your Holy Spirit as we seek a new Rector for this parish. Give us discernment, wisdom, and confidence in your timing. Guide the members of our Search Committee as they labor to be faithful in seeking your will.

We pray for the life of our parish, that we may continue to be strengthened in our mission to be Jesus Christ's heart, hands, and feet to our neighbors no matter where they are on their journey of faith. Bless us with mutual trust and respect, courage, and foresight as you shepherd our community through its journey. Grace us with continuous direction and inspire us toward genuine self-reflection. All this we ask as we walk in your ways to the glory of your name. Amen.

## FROM THE INTERIM RECTOR:

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*God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives. We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world you have created. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf. Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ, that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.*

The confession printed above is from *Enriching Our Worship*, a book published in 1997 with authorized liturgies to supplement our *Book of Common Prayer*. I offer this to you as something you may wish to ponder or to pray during these weeks of Lent. Lent is traditionally considered a “penitential season,” a time during which we are encouraged to examine our lives and behaviors and to repent, to turn from those “sinful desires that draw you from the love of God” (from the baptismal liturgy, p. 302 of the prayer book).

Too often, I think, we turn Lent into a time of focusing on our private sins, those things we’ve done (or left undone) that are mostly hurtful to others or immoral. That confession is fine and good and appropriate. But I want to spend some time this Lent looking at some broader sins in which I am enmeshed, and I find the confession from *Enriching Our Worship* helps me. How have I denied God’s goodness in myself and in others? It’s easy for me to “beat up” on myself—I generally hold myself to pretty high standards, and when I fail to meet them, I can spiral pretty quickly into feelings of unworthiness, or even worthlessness. It’s also easy to become impatient with and judgmental towards others. What might it be like if even for just one day we could all look at others through God’s loving and accepting eye? If we could see everyone not as the fallible and wounded humans that we are but as the beloved of God, as people God created, as people God sees as very good indeed? What about failing to recognize God’s goodness in what God has created?

And what about the evil that enslaves us? I think this is a really difficult concept. It’s not too hard to get a handle on the evil that we have done—that’s the list of private sins and transgressions. Much of “the evil that enslaves us” is systemic and cultural, and lots of it we would at least like to personally deny. We want to think, for example, that we personally are not prejudiced against a person on the basis of a group characteristic (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation). But subconsciously (or unconsciously) most of us are probably more prejudiced than we want to believe. Several years ago I clicked on an on-line tool about racism in the *New York Times* about racism. Through a series of responses of positive/negative to sets of visual images, the tool evaluated how one viewed racial groups. I smugly thought I’d sail through this and be rewarded with an assessment like “you are not prejudiced.” I was wrong. My results indicated that I had a “small preference” for Caucasians—not whopping prejudice, I was glad to see, but enough that I cannot claim to be free of the enslaving sin of racism. And I don’t know about you, but in the silence before our corporate confession of sin in our worship, I don’t usually include on my list sins like racism, or prejudice based on some other group characteristic. Those are enslaving sins, sins of which I’m often unaware, and I plan to spend some time in Lent considering and confessing them, and trying to work on ways to break out of those patterns.

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## Finance Committee Report

At our February 16<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting Lindy Faulconer, our treasurer, reported that as of January 31, 2021 we had received about 19 fewer pledges compared to 2020, when we had about 80 pledges. There is a substantial deficit in the church's proposed 2021 budget, about \$70,000. For the time being we are using the 2020 budget and restricting non-essential payments. We have been contemplating the next course of action.

The Vestry accepted our January recommendation to apply for a loan through the federal Payroll Protection Program. We have qualified for a \$37,900 loan, which should be "forgiven" if the funds are properly utilized; The loan likely will not have to be repaid. That reduces a projected budget shortfall for 2021 to about \$32,000 but does not portend well for future years. We need to increase our income while recognizing that with the doors closed for services and many activities curtailed due to the Covid-19 virus, it is difficult to attract new members.

Due to the shortfall in pledges, it did not seem reasonable to present a budget to the vestry for 2021. Any and all suggestions related to the budget will be seriously and carefully considered.

Linda Armstrong's term on the committee expired as of the February meeting, and we are grateful for her service. We are seeking volunteer(s) for her seat on the committee and her position as clerk. No special financial knowledge is required; what is required is a love for and commitment to our parish. Also, the clerk does not have to be a committee member.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bob Kendall, Chair

## February Vestry Highlights

The only item of business on the Vestry's February agenda was the 2021 budget for our parish. Vestry members approached the budget line by line to identify potential cuts and decided to ask the parish to consider increasing their pledges--or to make a pledge if one had not been made in the fall.

The Vestry also adopted a policy to strictly limit non-essential spending until a budget is adopted for 2021. Any expenditure from any account over \$100 requires prior approval.

While the projected \$30,000 deficit remaining after we receive the PPP loan is considerable, the Vestry is also aware that the 2022 budget will be on the horizon as we welcome our next rector, and without PPP funds (which are pandemic-related and so unlikely to be available again) the potential deficit is even greater.

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## HELP WANTED

**Clerk for Finance Committee**--this position requires attendance at a monthly meeting and the ability to take minutes of the Committee's work. Questions? Contact Bob Kendall (rkendall@aol.com, cell 330-465-7621).

**Newsletter Co-Editor** - Work with co-editor Pat Hovorka to produce our monthly newsletter. Knowledge of Microsoft Publisher would be an asset, but a willingness to learn it is more than enough. Questions? Ask Jill+ or Pat (phovorka17@gmail.com, 919-351-0094).

**Finance Committee Member** - If you immediately think "I can't do that because I don't have experience in bookkeeping/accounting/finance," think again! The Finance Committee meets monthly and offers guidance to the Vestry about St. Paul's finances. What you need to serve is a commitment to our parish - there are several "numbers gurus" already on the Committee. If you'd like to know more, contact Bob Kendall.



Thank you! Thank you ! Thank you!

St. Paul's ECW met on February 20 (masked, distanced and reduced in number, of course) to plan all the elements of the "Take The Chill Off" Soup and Chili sale. Everyone in attendance was given an assignment! We prepared all the food off-site in our individual kitchens using safe food handling measures since we are not allowed yet into the kitchen—the group cooking day was sorely missed! It's usually lots of laughs and camaraderie!

The St. Paul's family showed up to pick up their orders the following Saturday. More than 60 quarts of soup, 120 corn muffins and sweet treat "Thank You" baggies were distributed! Money is still coming in, but we made more than \$900 with sales and very generous donations!

Thank you to everyone who made this fundraiser a success! It was so wonderful to see some happy faces (from their masks up!) and just be able to say, "Hello Friend - I miss you!"

Nancy Gibbs, ECW President

## Pledge Obligations 2021

Last Week	Year to Date
2/28/2021	1/1/2021-2/28/2021
Pledge Payments \$3079.50	Pl. Payments \$34,481.17
Weekly Pledge Target \$4971.15*	Pledge Budget \$44,740.35*

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



## LENTEN FOOD DRIVE

The needs of our community are great during this pandemic time, and as a Lenten project the Outreach and Social Justice Committee asks you to help meet the needs of our hungry brothers and sisters. During March we will be collecting canned goods and non-perishable food for Smithfield Area Ministries. You can leave your donations on the bench outside the office and we'll make sure to get it to the food pantry.

Thanks in advance for your generosity.



**REMEMBER TO SET YOUR  
CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR  
BEFORE YOU GO TO BED ON  
SATURDAY, MARCH 13!**

## 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 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.

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: you don't need to subscribe to Facebook to watch the livestream. Simply choose "not now" if asked about adding an account.

## Stewardship Corner

"All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee." We have prayed these words again and again in our worship. They remind us that everything in this world comes courtesy of the Almighty. We are stewards of God's creation, so whatever we offer to God is God's own already.

As has been mentioned already in these pages, St. Paul's is a parish in financial need. Even as we anxiously await the day that we can worship together again in person, St. Paul's work and responsibilities continue. How can we help? Let's look inwardly at our personal situations. Some are already tapped out or overextended. We won't burden that group further. As for the rest of us, it's time to "look again in the couch cushions and car seats for loose change." Has the Covid situation given us an unseen financial windfall? Are we eating out less, not going to our favorite entertainment venue or vacation destination due to travel restrictions or the fact that events have been curtailed? Can we apply that to helping out at St. Paul's? Can we increase our pledge... maybe even just a little? We know everything we give will be put to good use.

We have a financial hill to climb from the deep valley we're in this year. It may help us avoid having to scale a steep cliff in 2022. In words from Psalm 50, let us "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High." In the spirit of our welcoming and generous congregation, let's step up and bring our Parish to the top of the hill.

Curtis Brookshire  
Stewardship Co-chair

## Holy Week and Easter: Worship Update

It seems to me that we've just started Lent, and we're actually nearing the mid-point. Holy Week begins before the end of March; we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord on the first Sunday in April.

Our bishops now allow us to worship with 25 people in the church and 50 people outside (masked and socially distanced) as long as the 14-day rolling average of Covid test positivity is less than 6.5%. As of the beginning of March, Johnston County had not reached this level.

I am so eager to see people in the pews on Sunday mornings—preaching to an essentially empty church is not fun! And I can't wait to meet more of you in person! That said, we are going to wait until after Easter to gather in our lovely church. This decision is based on several factors. First, I hope to avoid the potential whiplash of planning to gather on a given Sunday, then canceling those plans, then hoping to gather the following week. As more of us get vaccinated, the infection rate statewide is trending down, and I hope that we will see a similar decline here. By waiting until next month, we have a better chance of being able to open our doors and keeping them open. Second, while Easter would be a wonderful time to



## HOLY WEEK

gather again, it would be that's a lousy day to have to limit attendance to 25. I'm working on a way that we can gather on Easter Day in smaller groups AND receive the Eucharist after our morning worship.

Before we get there, we'll continue our live-streamed services. Plan to worship with us on the Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday (March 28), Maundy Thursday (April 1), Good Friday (April 2) and Holy Saturday (April 3). Look for details of these services in the weekly announcements.

Jill+

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## EASTER LILIES

It wouldn't be Easter without the lilies. And your generous donations help make that possible. It's a lovely way to remember the saints in your family who have gone before, and to honor people who are important to you now. The form for you to note your dedications will be included in the weekly announcements. Deadline for your dedications to be included is Monday, March 22.

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**FROM THE INTERIM RECTOR** (continued from page 2)

Another tricky concept that the *Enriching Our Worship* confession helps me to consider is “the evil done on our behalf.” Again, these sorts of sins are not the ones I regularly include when I make my confession—they aren’t sins that I have done or sins that have resulted from what I have individually failed to do. The evil done on our behalf can include acts from which we in some way benefit that hurt someone or something else: environmental degradation from any number of causes (including plastic bags, too much individual packaging of too much stuff we’re buying, and a sense that cleaning up today’s environmental messes is someone else’s problem); delighting in the affordability of “bargains” that are only bargains because the people who are making them in distant countries are being paid wages that cannot support anyone; and turning a blind eye to bad behaviors by people in groups to which we belong or groups which represent us are only a couple examples of this kind of sin.

Part of our liturgy on Ash Wednesday was an explicit invitation to the observance of a holy Lent, including self-examination and repentance. Part of my Lenten discipline is going to include an ongoing self-examination, confession, and repentance, using the *Enriching Our Worship* confession as a guide. I invite you to join me.

Faithfully,

Jill+



**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**

Sunday Schedule

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

**Upcoming Dates to Remember**

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| March 14 | Daylight Savings Time begins                              |
| March 16 | Finance, <b>6:00</b> pm (Zoom)                            |
| March 20 | ECW, <b>10:00</b> am, Lawrence Hall<br>(bring your masks) |
| March 23 | Vestry <b>7:00</b> pm (Zoom)                              |
| March 27 | Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday                        |