



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We have entered the New Year. Time is like a river flowing down stream. We stand on a bridge looking at the water flowing under the bridge downstream. We often see the New Year as a time of new beginnings. Looking at the river flowing under the bridge, perhaps we can learn several things.

First the water that flows under the bridge is the same upstream as it is downstream. As we enter the New Year, we take with us many of the same concerns and problems that were with us as the year 2023 came to an end. We had a temporary respite from those challenges as we celebrated Christmas. But then we returned to the real world.

We discover that many of the same challenges are still with us. There are the medical problems and other health issues that took some of the joy of life and caused life to be a burden. We are beginning a new year and the situation has not changed.

There are those who face life without a loved one; be it a spouse, a child, grandchild, or even a friend. Life is not the same with that special person not sitting at the table; or one we can sit down and talk to and find comfort is not there. We are told that life goes on, and it does; but the change seems so difficult and challenging. We might ask when will the emptiness in the heart and room every go away. Life goes on but it is a different life.

The same challenges continue that we faced on December 31st. There are the financial problems. Some economist predict a crash in the year to come. With the changing work force, some are forced to find new occupations to meet the financial needs of their families. With the cost of food so high, how can I put food on the table for my family.

We know that our sins are forgiven; but we are haunted by the past, the wrongs we have done, the angry words spoken to hurt rather than build up. Sins that seem to be carried over into the New Year. The story is told of two men talking at a party. We had differences with another person across the room. The friend said maybe you should forgive the person that hurt you. The friend agreed. He walked over to the man who hurt offended him and said, "I forgive you, just this once." We know that forgiving just once is not enough.

The water passes under the bridge and appears to be the same water that came from upstream. Standing on the bridge, looking upstream, we can remember God's grace and how He carried us, blessed us and showed us His love.

When confronted by death we have the Lord's promises, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, who ever believes in me has eternal life, though he die yet shall he live." Through faith we have passed from death to life. We can anticipate a great reunion and have the assurance that our Lord understands what we are going through because He faced the death of a friend and burst into tears as He approached the grave.

We remember the times of sickness and terrible diagnoses and think about the doctors and compassionate nurses that were at our side. Their wisdom and compassionate hands. The Lord promised through Isaiah, "I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right

hand." He was there extending His healing hand upon us. Then we realized when the ultimate healing will take place.

We recall the trials and uncertainties that we face but also remember the Lord's promise, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. "And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. For I am the Lord, your God."

When we become tired and weary because of the challenges of life we can remember the words of Isaiah, who wrote "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles..." Jesus said, "Come unto me, you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

When confronted by our sins, past and present, we can remember our Lord's words, "Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven." Isaiah wrote, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." We have been forgiven and can forgive as the Lord forgave us.

If we ever doubt that our God cares for us, understands what we go through, and has the compassion to help; we can look to the Baby who was laid in a manger at Bethlehem. He was Emmanuel, God with us. He experienced all that we experience, with the exception of sin, and has the power to help in every situation.

On behalf of Barb, Steve and Joy, Myka and Joslyn, we wish each of you a blessed and prosperous New Year.

Surrounded by God's grace, we can enjoy His blessing and face the challenges that come our way, and make this a good year to His glory.

In Christ,  
Pastor Raether

*Pastor Raether*

### **Stewardship Is Mission Focused**

When you think of stewardship, do your thoughts, like many, center only on giving? Giving is an essential part of stewardship, but it is much, much more. Stewardship education should always be more focused on raising people rather than raising funds. Stewardship is a faith and world view with God at the center. Stewardship is our faith in action.

Stewardship is often spoken of in terms of time, talents, and treasures. Referencing stewardship this way is acceptable, but it does not give us the total importance of stewardship. As God's stewards, we are to manage and give these three "Ts" faithfully, but these activities are means to end, not the end itself. The stewardship of our time, talents, and treasures should always be focused on God's Mission, which is the end of stewardship. God wants and enables us to join Him in His mission "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and to work with Him to bring about His will on earth. Through faith, we know that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), and He blesses us with the honor and privilege to help others enjoy His kingdom now on earth and to be with Him forever in eternity. Our life and mission here on earth is the Great Commission. We are to be doing what we can to help all people hear the Gospel message. God has a standing invitation to us to be His stewards who use all that He entrusts

to us to help others hear the good news of Jesus' love for them. With God's help, we will remember that the giving of our time, talents, and treasures are important because they are means toward expanding and extending God's kingdom.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, Who takes from us our hearts of stone and gives us hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), we, as God's stewards, are guided and equipped to do the works He has prepared for us to do. It is amazing that, in spite of our sinful ways, God calls us to participate with Him in sharing the good news of the Gospel. Each of us is a part of God's mission and has a purpose to fulfill. We are an important part of God's plan. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9). Paul also wrote, "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). He commended the Philippian Christians on their partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5). Just like the Philippian Christians, we Christians today share in that partnership. May God find all of us available and eager to be faithful stewards, who use our lives and blessings as willing and devoted participants to fulfill His mission on earth.

FROM: Stewardship Advisors

### WEDNESDAY MORNIG BIBLE STUDY (10:00 am) "God Never Gives Up on You"

God Never Gives Up on You is a five-session Bible study. In this study, bestselling author Max Lucado reveals how God used Jacob-the misbehaving patriarch who was strong on savvy but low on conscience-simply because God chose to use Jacob. Period. The word for such devotion? Grace. Grace came after Jacob. Grace found him in the desert. Grace protected him in exile. Grace wrestled him to the ground and blessed him. Grace led him home to Canaan. Jacob's story invites us to believe in a God who sticks with the unworthy and underachievers until we are safely at home. Following is the schedule for this study:

- Jan. 10 – "Taking Shortcuts" Genesis 27:1-28:17
- Jan. 17 – "Reaping What You Sow" Genesis 28:18-29:30
- Jan. 24 – "Living with a Louse" Genesis 29:31-31:55
- Jan. 31 – "Wrestling With God" Genesis 32:1-33:20
- Feb. 7 – "Returning Home" Genesis 34:1-35:29

### THE SEASON OF LENT

The Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday February 17th . Our Mid-week services will be held at 1:00 p.m. every Wednesday. We will develop a special Lenten Series for the Sunday's in Lent. As we did last year, the LCMS pastor will exchange pulpits on Wednesdays. We should have a schedule next month.

### SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS (10:15 am) "The Miracles of Lent"

The theme of this study is the several miracles and miraculous signs performed by God during the Passion of Jesus Christ. The important and significant miracles and miraculous signs that God the Father performed to set apart His Son's death from absolutely all others were performed to help spread the Good News, which is centered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the face of opposition. Following is a tentative schedule for this study:

- Jan. 7 – No class – pastor leads worship at St. Paul and Prince of Peace
- Jan. 14 – "The Miraculous Darkness" Matthew 27:45
- Jan. 21 – "The Miraculous Tearing of the Temple Curtain" Matthew 27:51a
- Jan. 28 – "The Miraculous Earthquake" Matthew 27:51b
- Feb. 4 – No class – pastor leads worship at St. Paul and Prince of Peace
- Feb. 11 – "The Miracle of the Splitting Rocks" Matthew 27:51c
- Feb. 18 – "The Miraculous Raising of the Saints from Death" Matthew 27:52,53
- Feb. 25 – "The Miraculous Faith of the Roman" Soldiers Matthew 27:54
- Mar. 3 – No class – pastor leads worship at St. Paul and Prince of Peace
- Mar. 10 – "The Miracle of Good Friday" 1 Peter 3:18
- Mar. 17 – "The Miracle of Christ's Decent into Hell" 1 Peter 3:18,19
- Mar. 24 – "The Miracle of Easter" Matthew 28:1-10

### Board of Education

December 6, 2023

**Members:** Jill Davis, Sue Macek, Rev Raether

**Library:** We have a new book written by Marcus "Flame" Gray published by Concordia Publishing House titled, "Extra NOS, Discovering Grace Outside Myself". This is about a Christian rapper's personal experience who came from fear to freedom and from guilt to grace. Take time to read this book of encouragement.

**St. Paul:** December 5th and 7th are the Preschool Xmas programs, December 19th is K-8th programs. Christmas break starts 12/22 - 12/31.

**Confirmation report:** they will be off until January 3, 2024.

**Sunday School report:** Lessons for December include The Golden Calf, God with His People, The Twelve Spies, Rahab Believes, and The Fall of Jericho. We will be working on some Christmas ornaments for our craft. Will contact Ron Brown to make 10 Christmas sacks for the Sunday School. to be given on December 24th at Sunday School.

**Family Fellowship report:** We set the next meeting date on February 11, 2024. More information later.

**Cradle Roll:** Fred S will start working on the wooden Baptismal lambs in the spring.

**Old Business:** We can order the VBS curriculum in December.

**New Business:** Will turn in the Sunday School budget and Prochiral report this month.

Next meeting is January 3, 2024

Sue Macek, Chairman

## Lutheran Women's Fellowship

December 6, 2023

The Lutheran Women's Fellowship met on December 6 for a potluck and meeting at 12:00 p.m. Eleven members attended the potluck/meeting. Pastor Raether had prayer and table prayer. After potluck, Sally Zuspahn called the meeting to order and gave updates.

### Committee reports:

Treasurer, Card Counter, and Funeral Fund reports were all approved.

### Old Business:

**Christmas Shoebox Project:** Prince of Peace had 18 boxes donated.

### New Business:

**December "Winkle" Conference:** Prince of Peace on Tuesday.

**January Funeral Committee:** Carol Locke & Nancy Herzberg.

**Shut-Ins Birthday:** None this month.

**Birthdays:** Jean Martinson

**Next Meeting:** January 4. **Hostress:** Officers.

Game "Just for Fun" (word scramble, complete songs, winter trivia) after short updates. Ended the meeting with Christmas songs.

LaVonne Peters, Secretary.



### PIPE ORGAN REPAIR & UPGRADE

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church's pipe organ was installed in 1978, and has provided our members and visitors with beautiful music as we have worshiped our gracious God for the last 46 years. During this period of time, the only maintenance has been a tuning periodicaly. During this time there have been no major problems.

Over the years, a relay has become charred and presents a serious fire hazard, this condition has existed for over 18 years. There is a problem with the memory in the organ, and recently one of the pedal springs broke and is being replaced. There are several other mechanical issues with our organ.

The Levsen Organ Company of Buffalo, Iowa, who has been tuning the organ, did a complete review of the organ's condition and has

made a number of recommendations which include: replacing the relay (which currently is a fire hazard), new stops on the existing pipes, a program to record the service and hymns in case the organist is gone, and a number of upgrades, which have come about over the years, which will improve our organ.

Total cost of the repair and upgrade of Prince of Peace Lutheran's organ will be \$85,000. This amount seems high, but we remember that there has been almost no expenditure for the organ over years, other than tuning.

The Church Council voted to recommend this expenditure pending approve by the voters of the congregation. This will be taken up at the Annual Voters Meeting following our worship service on January 14.

The Foundation has agreed to pay for the initial cost of \$85,000. Members of the congregation will be encouraged to contribute to the "Organ Repair and Upgrade Fund" which will reimburse the Foundation with the funds that are raised. Once the organ is repaired, we may have a special "Organ Recital" with the proceeds going to the fund.

If you have any questions about the condition of the organ, please see Steve Long.

## JANUARY Birthdays & Anniversaries

Meadow Peterson -(1/1), Tillie Barber -(1/4), Connie Tyrrell -(1/5), Kathleen Nelson -(1/8), Nancy Herzerg -(1/12), Tetyana Hansen -(1/14), Delores Dencklau -(1/15), Latrayah Dungy -(1/15), Leander Terrell Jr. -(1/15), Elizabeth Fuller -(1/16), Carol Locke -(1/16), Tauni Sundermeyer -(1/16), Jameson Trushcheff -(1/17), Attachai Thanupakorn -(1/18), Lori Read -(1/19), Leslie Castor -(1/21), Kevin Dencklau -(1/21), William Busse -(1/25), James Trost -(1/26), Tom Brown -(1/28), and Gene Schoon -(1/31).

Membership Report for December 2023

GAIN

Confirmed +

Baptized +

LOSS

Confirmed -

Baptized -

**Communicant = 163**  
**Baptized (not confirmed) = 46**  
**Total baptized souls = 209**

Financial Report December 2023

Income (Offerings)

Home/Current \$10,842.50, Missions Budget \$192.50, Loose Offerings \$257.40, New Year's Offering \$91.00, Advent Offering \$588.00, Christmas Offering \$1,130.00, Special Offering \$84.00, Miscellaneous \$1,334.49, Organ Fund \$170.00.

**Total Offerings \$14,689.89**

Expenses

Pastor \$2,000.00, Payroll \$901.34, Organist \$600.00, Pastoral Expenses \$628.15, Ministry Expenses \$276.51, Television Ministry \$51.01, Portals of Prayer \$205.82, Office Supplies \$64.20, Computer/Internet \$389.52, Church Supplies \$146.59, Water \$105.78, Pest Control \$39.00, Gas & Electric \$643.00, Snow Removal, \$100.00, Sanitation \$40.66, Property Repairs \$981.34, W/H Tax \$166.46, Missions \$192.50, Charities \$1,214.00, Advertising \$236.00.

**Total Expenses \$8,981.88**

**Net Income \$5,708.01**

**ATTENDANCE**

Sunday	Worship	Communion
12/3	32	
12/10	41	38
12/17	43	
12/24	38	36
12/31		
<u>Advent</u>		
12/6	27	
12/13	33	
12/20	26	
Christmas Eve	50	
Christmas Day	29	23

