

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
548 OLD SWEDE ROAD
DOUGLASSVILLE PA 19518
Telephone (610) 385-6616
Fax (610) 385-6690
www.stpaulsdouglassville.com
info@stpaulsdouglassville.com
The Rev. Gregory W. Frey, Pastor



AUGUST, 2020

Racism: A Confession

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28)

When Russ from St Gabriel's Episcopal Church asked me to be a part of a small group of people who would be standing outside their church on Rt 422, advocating for racial justice I knew I had to do it. I see within myself many inconsistencies between what I believe about God's intentions for racial harmony and what I actually do to effect it. Honestly, I haven't really done anything at all. So I saw this as a starting place.

Standing on the side of the road, socially distanced from the other 4 people there and wearing a mask, I held a rudimentary sign I made that said, "Racism is over if you want it." I'm not convinced I completely believe my own sign, but we live in hope. While standing there I thought about the first encounter I can remember having with a non-white person.

I was in kindergarten and the Allentown School District bused African American kids to my elementary school for desegregation. A girl named Deborah was in my class. I marveled at her hair (cliché I know but that's what I remember). I also remember that I was afraid of her. She seemed mean to me. One day she caught me looking at her and said, "What are you staring at, snaggle tooth?!" I remember it like it was yesterday. Now

I realize how terrified that little girl was, bused miles and miles away from her family and friends and dropped into a lily-white pool of strangers. But at the time I thought she was just mean.

Racial tension and racial injustice is all about fear and this fear is something of an original fear buried deep within our American consciousness. Some have called it our original sin, staining our acts, and binding our will. We humans make our worst decisions and perpetrate our most awful acts when we are afraid, and what scares us most is a menace we can barely even see.

Back at St. Gabe's beside of the road we heard a lot of traffic noise, some honking but every once in a while a voice shouted from a passing car, "All Lives Matter!" One of the signs someone held read "Black Lives Matter" so I suppose it was yelled in response to this. The tone, however, was unmistakable. The "all lives matter" shouts were an angry rebuke to the message of racial reconciliation we were advocating by the side of the road. I cannot know what was going on in the minds of those motivated to shout at us, but it got me thinking.

That all lives matter is absolutely true. It is also true that drawing attention to a particular category of those lives, the lives of black Americans, does not negate that. But I am not sure the opposite is also true.

I imagined I had an old friend who experienced a terrible loss, let's say they lost a child, the worst thing. I run into this person and I haven't heard from them in a long time. I ask them how they've been. In the course of the conversation they say, "my child died." After an awkward silence I blurt out "everybody dies." Two things I know, (1) while what I said is universally true my saying it in the context of this particular grief sounds like a dismissal of it (2) I probably now have one less friend.

I believe there is a significant problem with the proportion of black men and women killed every year by police (and not just by white officers), that this is a long-standing issue, and that we have not given it adequate attention. Black Lives Matter, as a general movement, seeks to focus our attention on this reality and begin implementing changes to affect the situation. I can advocate for the overarching principles of this movement even if I do not agree with all of the expressions of this

movement. I also believe we need to do this for the sake of all people in our communities, regardless of race. I also believe we need to focus on this now for the sake of black men and women AND our law enforcement officers.

I am concerned about our police officers. First, I think police are used way too much for situations they probably should not have to be a part of. This seems to be one of the recognitions being discussed when it comes to police reform. But I am also concerned that the very real situation of unjust shootings is tarnishing the reputations of the police who are, in fact, deeply committed to their public service.

I think about it this way. When we first started to hear about abuse by clergy, especially the systemic child sexual abuse, covered up particularly within the Roman Catholic church hierarchical system, it effected all pastors. Being a pastor and wearing a clerical collar had once been, for Christians, a comforting sign of that person's devotion to God, now it was becoming a sign that raised suspicion, even outrage and resentment. While most saw the clergy as a protector, those who had been abused saw them very differently.

Protestant clergy felt the backlash after the revelations, but my colleagues in the Roman Catholic church have faced it even more. Of course, it is understandable. Child sexual abuse by pedophiles in the church is almost the worst thing possible. Fear of the horrible reality of the situation and potential consequences frightened church leaders, causing them to cover it up. We make our worst decisions when we are afraid. This disaster is an all too familiar component of human nature but its impact of the effectiveness of our Christian witness has been catastrophic.

The cover up of a systemic problem within the church made the situation so much worse. The priesthood actually attracted abusers because they knew they would be "protected" by the system. As a consequence, while the vast majority of priests are devoted servants of God making all kinds of sacrifices for God and neighbor, they ended up being stained by the horrible acts of the few enabled by a system that should have been protecting those in their charge but was really mainly protecting itself.

Do you see an analogous situation for police? I do, and I think that ignoring the problem only makes it worse for the faithful and dedicated to carry out their vocations. It also makes it very difficult for those who are supposed to be served to appropriately trust and have any kind of confidence in those called to protect and serve, be they pastors or police.

I am sure we all have a great variety of opinions about this issue, the severity of the problem, and steps needed to move toward resolution. But I wanted to share a bit of my own experience because I do believe the church can be an important agent in encouraging and facilitating positive change. I also realize that that change begins in the confessions of my heart and in yours.

I pray that God will give us the courage to face these issues with compassion, a passion for justice and the hopefulness that comes with faith in the mysterious yet constant movement and inspiration of the Spirit of Christ.

--Pastor Frey

--WORSHIP IN AUGUST--

| | |
|-----------|--|
| August 1 | 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 2 | 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 6 | 9:00 A.M. – Holy Communion (high-risk) |
| August 8 | 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 9 | 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 13 | 9:00 A.M. – Holy Communion (high-risk) |
| August 15 | 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 16 | 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 20 | 9:00 A.M. – Holy Communion (high risk) |
| August 22 | 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 23 | 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 27 | 9:00 A.M. – Holy Communion (high-risk) |
| August 29 | 6:00 P.M. – Holy Communion |
| August 30 | 8:00 & 10:30 A.M. – Holy Communion |

FROM THE PARISH RECORDS.....

Contribution to the **Agape Fund** in memory of **Rev. George & Ann Deisher** given by Alice Sprague.

THOUGHTS...by Joy Gerhart

One of my sources for material for Sunday school lessons that I send via email over the summer is “Lesson Plans that Work” which is produced by the Episcopal church. (Our Augsburg-Fortress publishing house doesn’t publish Sunday school material for our lectionary—Sunday Bible readings—for the summer which is a shame, but I think they used to and then stopped because churches were not buying it.) At the beginning of all the lessons over the summer in the season of/after Pentecost they say this:

“In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus’ ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word “ordinal” which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green, and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world. We join in that call, and we grow in our faith.”

Hmmmm—Growing time. . . stories of what God is calling us to do in the world. . . grow in faith. How are we growing? What is God calling us to do in the world? Not easy questions to answer.

In Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says “Do not worry . . . Seek [or strive] first [for] the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt. 6:25, 33)



Then we hear about the kingdom of God (or heaven as Matthew calls it) in many parables.

What is the kingdom of God? The word makes us think that it is a geographical place, but it is more of a state of being, a climate—the dominion of God, the kingship of God, the reign of God. I

like to say—looking to the Lord’s Prayer—that God’s kingdom comes when God’s will IS done. When God rules in our hearts, minds, and actions, then we are in the “kingdom.”

What do the parables teach us? I helped lead a Vacation Bible School which focused on 5 parables and the title/theme of the VBS was “Upside Down and Inside Out on Main Street.” (We made a wonderful mural of shops along Main Street, and another church even borrowed it the following year!) That title has stuck with me, though, because parables tend to turn us upside down and inside out. Huh? What in the world does that mean? It means that in God’s kingdom, things are not the same as in the view of the world. The first are last, the weak are strong, the humble are exalted, different things are considered valuable in God’s eyes, different from the world’s values. Things are seen from a different perspective through God’s eyes. Unexpected things happen. The tiniest of seeds grow into huge bushes. A bit of leaven mysteriously puffs up a whole wad of dough. God generously offers God’s Word to everyone. Justice is more important than wealth or worldly goods. God seeks out the lost. God forgives. But God has expectations, too. God wants us to forgive. God wants us to bear fruit. God wants us to feed the hungry and visit the sick and imprisoned. God wants us to be prepared. God wants us to grow even in the midst of evil in the world. God wants us to be just and fair and truthful in an unjust world.

That’s what I get from the parables. (My Bible lists 40 different parables, and 22 are in Matthew, in case you are interested.) Many of the parables are difficult for us to understand. Sometimes we try too hard to interpret more than the one main point they try to impart. Sometimes they are just meant to shake us up or wake us up. Jesus’ mission included proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. And of course, we aren’t talking about a time way in the future but a time NOW for the kingdom of God to be here with us.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL.....

It's not too late to enjoy the 5 sessions of Vacation Bible School that we have posted on our website. We hope children of all ages (and adults too) will enjoy the stories, crafts, and experiments. We have made the sessions personal by filming our own St. Paul's people. For more information read the "Attention Grandparents" article. Share the website with friends. Everyone is welcome to enjoy the fruits of our labors!



ATTENTION GRANDPARENTS!

Did I get your attention? I was told by someone who shall remain nameless that sometimes certain segments of our congregation do not look at articles about youth and Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Well, I know several grandparents who are having a ball watching this summer's Vacation Bible School together with their grandchildren. This year it is posted online and we are sharing one story each week for 5 weeks. We are talking about serving our family, friends, neighbors, community, and Jesus, and we are hearing the Bible stories about Joseph and his brothers, Jesus healing a paralyzed man, the Good Samaritan, Zacchaeus, and Peter and John healing a Lame Man. The story tellers are our very own St. Paul's teachers, as are our craft demonstrators. Our science experiments are led by "Jared the Science Guy," and Pastor Frey welcomes you and prays with you at the beginning of each new session.

We are so grateful to our talented technology people, Luke Yambor, Craig Yambor, and Rich Saylor, without whom this production would not have been possible.

Even if you don't have a grandchild to share this experience with, you may get a kick out of our unique VBS program for this year and be inspired to SERVE!

<http://stpaulsdouglassville.com/2020-vbs-week-1/>.

<http://stpaulsdouglassville.com/2020-vbs-week-2/> .

<http://stpaulsdouglassville.com/2020-vbs-week-3/>.

<http://stpaulsdouglassville.com/2020-vbs-week-4/>.

<http://stpaulsdouglassville.com/2020-vbs-week-5/>.

SPARK Story Bibles

Our Sunday School curriculum uses the SPARK lectionary series which leans heavily on the child-friendly version of the Bible stories and art work in this Bible. (We use the SPARK Bible in our Sunday School classes.) This Bible is designed for children from Age 2 to Grade 2 and includes 150 Bible stories (Old Testament and New Testament). There is a little caterpillar, "Squiggles" who appears in each drawing which kids love to look for, and there is a little question at the end of each story.



We have a number of these Bibles here at church and can easily order more. The artwork is very bright and appealing. (They call it vibrant.) I have used their characters for children's sermons, so you may have already seen the art. (A lot of things were from already printed Sunday School material.) Anyway, while we are in the throes of this pandemic and with Sunday school up in the air, you may want to have a nice children's Bible resource to read at home. Please call Joy at the church or email me at jgerhart@stpaulsdouglassville.com if you would like a Bible for \$20.

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

It was recently announced that after serious thought and prayer, the Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN is being postponed until the summer of 2022. I think we can all agree that the idea of 30,000 assembling next summer (2021) was going to be very iffy. This may be good news for some of our youth who might have been too young to attend in 2021. Hopefully we will be able to enjoy fund raisers and preparation events for youth in 2022 in anticipation of this exciting experience.

SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE UPDATE.....

The Social Ministry Committee is asking for donations to defray the cost of providing a meal to the residents of Safe Berks once a month. During the pandemic they plan to use a catering service. When the pandemic is over, the committee will prepare the meal. Please indicate on your donation that it is for the "Safe Berks meal".

WEEKLY PRAYER SERVICE—Wednesdays—9:00 A.M.

Our Wednesday morning prayer group will resume when the pandemic restrictions are lifted. We pray for every member of the congregation on Wednesday



mornings at 9 am. If you see your name here it is not because we think you have a specific need for prayer, but to let you know you are in our prayers whatever your need may be. On Wednesday mornings we also pray for churches around the world, leaders in the ELCA, our staff and council members, our political leaders, those in the military, special requests, and many more. If you are free a Wednesday morning, stop in and join us. We are always finished before 9:30 AM. Please include in your prayers this month: Rhonda Maloney, Alex Maloney, Ada Marchewski, Karen Marquette, Dylan Marquette, Charles Marquette, Jamison Young, Gabriel Schulze Luanne Martin, Dana Martinsen, Nicole Sudall, Cindy Matosky, Jennifer Matosky. If you have anyone to add to the prayer list, please fill out a Prayer Request Card found in the pew racks or call the church office. Please pray for those with special concerns: Makayla Becker, Angela Bell, Avery Boorse, Michael Burd, Carole, Barbara DePrefontaine, Emily, David Friedman, Gary G., Sara Hartline, Connie Hunter, Terry Johnson, Sue Keay, Garry Kopp, Wendy Magargal, Richard Pool, June Rhoads, Audrey Serrian, Eva Thomas, Daniel Weiser, Beth Yoder, Sandi Zelinski, family and friends of Gerald Levensgood, and all others listed below or those we name in our hearts: Cynthia Adam, Jake Campbell, Karin DiSanto, Ron Glaser, Diana Gower, Charles Heffner, Larry Herbst, Bobby Hubert, Robin Hynes, Linda Loshnowsky, Karen McGavin, Edith Moyer, Jerry Muller, Ron Mutter, Richard Randolph, Lenore Robinson, John Shaner, Vernet Spence-Brown, Jason Stalneck, Craig Williams, Jane Williams; homebound -- Dorothy Brown, Peggy Burns, Jennie Clouser, Carol DeLong, Jan Haas, Betty High, Arlene Hildebeitel, Ellen Sheeler, Alma Shirey, Patsy Smale, Dale Szajek, Pauline Trout, Richard Wise.



| | | | |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| 8/1 | Lynn Gibson | 8/13 | Janice Jancovic |
| | Dana Martinsen | 8/14 | Rebecca Alford |
| | Adrienne Sheeler | | Denise Chroscinski |
| 8/2 | John Heisey | | Jeffrey Schaeffer |
| | Susie Kresge | 8/15 | Alexandra Espinosa |
| | Eric Shank | | Ellen Sheeler |
| 8/3 | Kathryn Berger | 8/16 | Kayla Heisey |
| | Kathy Jablonski | | Hallie Levensgood |
| | Rose Potts | 8/17 | Samuel Haring |
| 8/4 | Rosa Crichton | | Madelyn Hicks |
| | Madalynne Forster | 8/18 | Rylan Brown |
| 8/5 | Callie Kupp | 8/19 | Kevin Forster |
| | Jansen Loscig | | Aeson Poux |
| | Zachary Secord | 8/20 | Jennifer Knabb |
| 8/6 | Ronald Donachie | 8/22 | Valerie Day |
| | Ann Mengel | | Grant Moser |
| 8/7 | David Hackett | | Mark Smith |
| | Callan Kriebel | 8/23 | Tim Schell |
| | Pat Levensgood | 8/24 | Christopher Venn |
| 8/8 | James Breen | 8/25 | Allie Dougherty |
| | Myla Eisenhard | | Donna Meloy |
| | Ariana Haraske | 8/26 | Tyler Bennis |
| | Aubrey Ridge | | Sandi Levensgood |
| | Erna Vroman | 8/27 | Liam Conway |
| 8/9 | Brian Miller | | Mary Levensgood |
| 8/10 | Gryffin Cappellano | | Melissa Woodruff |
| | Mia DeNardo | 8/28 | Connor Reed |
| | McKenna Detwiler | | Henry Rhoads |
| | Andrew Kresge | 8/29 | Olivia Hendricks |
| | Sophia Lott | | Rob Levensgood |
| 8/11 | Anne Cormier | | Jennifer Moyer |
| | Colson Tsakonas | | Chase Oesterling |
| 8/12 | Joseph Price | | Bonnie Steever |
| | Kim Sarro | 8/31 | Scott Potts |

HAPPY WEDDING ANNIVERSARY TO –

| | | |
|---------------------------|------|---------|
| John & Elizabeth Dollhopf | 8/1 | 22 yrs. |
| Bruce & Pam Cope | 8/4 | 30 yrs. |
| David & Vicki Hiser | 8/6 | 37 yrs. |
| John & Kay Bonslaver | 8/7 | 55 yrs. |
| Charles & Sue Fix | 8/9 | 23 yrs. |
| Michael & Wendy Hasara | 8/12 | 14 yrs. |
| Bruce & Janet Musselman | 8/12 | 42 yrs. |
| Bill & Angie Kutz | 8/16 | 34 yrs. |
| Paul & Laurie Muschick | 8/17 | 24 yrs. |
| Matthew & Katrina Fusco | 8/18 | 8 yrs. |
| David & Jan Bause | 8/19 | 59 yrs. |
| Brian & Amy Hicks | 8/19 | 25 yrs. |
| Jeff & Sheila Angstadt | 8/20 | 32 yrs. |
| Ed & Sandra Berger | 8/20 | 26 yrs. |
| Greg & Susie Kresge | 8/20 | 26 yrs. |
| Rick & Nancy Centrella | 8/21 | 44 yrs. |
| Wayne & Lynn Grace | 8/24 | 46 yrs. |
| Tom & Judy Morrow | 8/24 | 50 yrs. |
| Herb & Darlene Schoenly | 8/26 | 25 yrs. |
| Jason & Apryll Ware | 8/30 | 13 yrs. |

| --YTD Giving thru June 2020-- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| Revenue | YTD thru 6/19 | YTD thru 6/20 | Variance |
| Giving, etc. | 237,740 | 221,900 | (15,840) |
| CDC | 434,053 | 230,330 | (203,723) |
| Total Rev. | 671,793 | 452,230 | (219,563) |
| Expenses | 641,734 | 529,115 | (112,619) |
| Profit (Loss) | 30,059 | (76,885) | (106,944) |

thank you!

Thanks to all who have been faithfully mailing their contributions to the church office and to those who signed up for electronic giving through Simply Giving.

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Assembly 2020 Will Be Held Online

Friday evening, October 16 & Sunday afternoon, October 18

Friday evening, October 23 & Saturday morning and afternoon, October 24

At its meeting on July 14 the Synod Council voted 19-1 to hold Assembly 2020 online. This decision was not made quickly or lightly. Two resolutions were presented: (1) hold Assembly 2020 online or (2) cancel Assembly 2020 and hold the bishop election at Assembly 2021. Members of the Assembly Planning Team shared information about the feasibility of an online assembly, including the technology that would be needed, the process for voting, the agenda, and other details of how it would take place. After two hours of serious debate, the resolution to hold Assembly 2020 online was brought to the floor, voted on, and adopted.

Because the election of a bishop is by ecclesiastical ballot, and because lengthy online sessions are extremely fatiguing, the Assembly will be conducted on two successive weekends. The first ballot, on which the name of any pastor rostered in the ELCA can be entered, will happen on Friday evening, Oct. 16. Time will be required to vet all the names and to determine which individuals request that their name be removed. For that reason, the second session will be held on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 18, at which time there will be a second ballot.

The top seven candidates will be notified, vetted, and invited to come to The Lutheran Center the following Friday evening, Oct. 23, to answer questions prepared by the Election Team based on input from surveying the synod. Then on Saturday morning, Oct. 24, a third ballot will be conducted. Saturday afternoon the three finalists will be introduced and offered an opportunity to address the Assembly. Following that will be a fourth ballot, and later a fifth ballot. (Note: a tie on the fourth or fifth ballot could result in a sixth ballot.)

Other business of the synod will be conducted throughout the sessions, including a presentation from our Churchwide representative (still to be determined), adoption of the spending plan and compensation guidelines, other elections, debate on various resolutions brought to the Assembly, and other traditional and/or required reports and presentations. There will be an online worship service prior the beginning of the first session on Friday, Oct. 16; and the offering for World Hunger will be received through a "Donate" button on the synod website.

The Assembly Planning Team is acutely aware of the challenges involved in holding an online assembly. Every effort is being made to insure that Assembly 2020 feels as "normal" as possible and that the experience is secure, yet user friendly and readily accessible. Once registration is complete, voting members will be contacted with the instructions they need in order to participate.

Please check the synod website at <http://nepasynod.org/assembly-2020/> for more information as it becomes available. Registration will open mid-August, and a strict deadline for submitting registrations (probably very early October) will need to be observed because of technological requirements.

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2354 Grove Road, Allentown PA 18109; 610-266-5101. nepsinfo1988@gmail.com.
View the full color edition online at <http://nepasynod.org>.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

August 2020

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | |
|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Council persons in charge of services— Tom Longstaff, Karla Rosenbusch </div> | | | | | | 1 6 PM—Holy Communion | |
| 2 8 & 10:30 —Holy Comm. | 3 10 AM—Bible Study 7 PM--Chr. Ed. | 4 2 PM—TOPS 6:15—Child Dev. | 5 10 AM—Bible Study | 6 9 AM—Worship for high risk Holy Communion | 7 10 AM—Bible Study | 8 6 PM—Holy Communion | |
| 9 8 & 10:30 —Holy Comm. 9:30--Finance | 10 10 AM—Bible Study 7 PM—Pastoral Care | 11 2 PM--TOPS | 12 10 AM—Bible Study 7 PM--Council | 13 9 AM—Worship for high risk Holy Communion | 14 10 AM—Bible Study | 15 7:30AM--Property 6 PM- Holy Communion | |
| 16 8 & 10:30 —Holy Comm. 9:15—Social Min. | 17 10 AM—Bible Study | 18 2 PM--TOPS | 19 10 AM—Bible Study | 20 9 AM—Worship for high risk Holy Communion 7:30—Crime Watch | 21 10 AM—Bible Study | 22 6 PM--Holy Communion | |
| 23 8 & 10:30 —Holy Comm. | 24 10 AM—Bible Study | 25 2 PM--TOPS | 26 10 AM—Bible Study 7 PM—Worship & Music | 27 9 AM—Worship for high risk Holy Communion | 28 10 AM—Bible Study | 29 6 PM--Holy Communion | |
| 30 8 & 10:30 —Holy Comm. | 31 10 AM—Bible Study | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Please note: The 8:00 A.M. services will also be live-streamed. </div> | | | | | |