



# The Messenger

## New Beginnings

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! - Corinthians 5:17*

Do you ever think about why we celebrate New Year's Day? It's just another day, so why is it so important to people?

I suspect it's because a new year offers a new beginning. There's a reason January is the most booming month of the year for gyms and diet programs – because it seems like a chance to start over, to improve yourself. It seems like a natural time to begin something, which is why lots of people make New Year's resolutions (whether they stick to them or not is another story!).

I wish one of those resolutions would be to join us in church each week! And not just because I want our pews filled.

The Christian life offers so many opportunities for fresh starts – for starting to live differently. Each week in worship we begin with a time of confession. We admit before God and each other that our lives are not perfect, that we do the things we should not do – and fail to do things we should do.

Then, immediately after confession, we hear God's response. We hear the good news that because of God's forgiveness, because God loves us, we all get a new beginning. The slate is wiped clean. We don't need to carry the weight of our sins or guilt with us anymore. We are forgiven!

And then we run into the next week (or maybe just the next day ... or the next couple of minutes)! It doesn't take long before we make mistakes again. That is being human. But we always have another opportunity to remember God's love. God never gets tired of forgiving us!

In The Small Catechism, Martin Luther said we ought to begin each day in this way: "In the morning, as soon as you get out of bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: 'God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.' Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer ... After singing a hymn, or whatever else may serve your devotion, you are to go to your work joyfully."

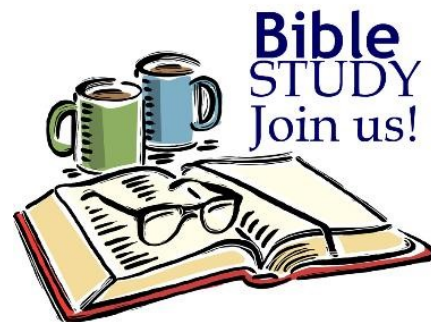
Now, you might not have the time for all those things each morning. But what about asking God in prayer to watch over you? Maybe saying the Lord's Prayer or another brief prayer? We've been reading a devotional together. I've heard from many of you that you like its brevity. If you need suggestions for a new one to continue that small time with God each day, let me know and I can offer a few suggestions. Consider joining us for the Adult Bible Study a couple of times each month. If you can't attend in person, I can get you the study materials to "participate" from home.

You don't have to wait for a new year to have a fresh start. Each day offers the opportunity to remember that you are a child of God. You have been claimed, redeemed, and set free by Jesus Christ.

In His Peace+  
Pastor Christine



# Adult Bible Study: God's Journey With Us



Join us in a unique overview of scripture in which we explore the eight core stories in the Bible that lie at the heart of biblical faith. By studying these ancient stories, the original narrative unfolds before us and we begin to see how God continues to act, here and now, in us and through us. This new study will begin on Monday, January 13. The Adult Bible Study group meets at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of each month at the church and is led by Pastor Christine and Tami Putnam. If you are interested in joining, call or email Pastor Christine so she can order the accompanying study guide. Book cost is \$14.95 but accommodations can be made if the price is a hardship. If you are interested in studying but are unavailable for the Monday night discussions simply order the guide and follow along with us from home. You can always email your comments for us to share with the group if you'd like.

## Good News! Living Lutheran is back

Living Lutheran magazine will be back to a quarterly print edition in 2025. Each issue (spring, summer, winter and fall) will feature the stories you know and love, along with updates on the church and your ELCA community. We can get the cost down for you from \$19.95 for an individual subscription to \$17 per subscriber if at least 10 households want a subscription. Please let Pastor Christine know if you'd like to subscribe by January 19.



## Red Bag!

We will continue with Red Bag collections on the 2nd Sunday of each month.  
January - Mission & Vision (ELCA)



## Altar Flowers

If you would like to donate flowers in memory of or honor someone, please sign your name on the flower chart located on the kiosk. Flowers are \$25. Make checks payable to St. Paul Lutheran Church, noting "altar flowers" on the memo line. Thank you in advance for your donations.

**Reminder! Annual Reports are due in the office by January 20!**



Bibles and Bagels will meet at Edinger's the usual day and time of 9:30 on January 2, 2025. Please note that in the new year we will change our day to the **FIRST** Thursday of the month, instead of the second. Everything else will remain the same.



### L.E.O. (Let's Eat Out)

L.E.O. gathers St. Paul members and friends on the third Wednesday of each month to enjoy dinner out. This month we will meet on Wednesday, January, 15 at 5:30 pm at Edinger's!



### WELLNESS SUNDAY

Health and Wellness Sunday is the third Sunday of each month. Mary Leach or one of our parish nurses will be on hand before and after worship to check blood pressure, blood sugar, and to help with questions about your health.



Rebecca Circle will meet on Thursday, Jan. 16 at 1:30 pm. The hostess will be Marian Brown and leading our study will be Lucy Kehinde. We begin the year with a series by Denise Rector, from Gathering Magazine entitled "Faithfulness". January is about Naomi and Ruth. Each less will give us a different example of Faithfulness, so join us any 3rd Thursday @ 1:30 pm!



### FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Our food pantry collections for the month of January & February are Toilet Paper and Pancake Mix (the complete, just add water). Thanks for being the hands and feet of Jesus in our community!



If you have a confidential prayer request that you would like members of our church prayer chain to pray over, please contact Pastor Christine or notify the office. If you have a prayer request to be added to the announcements, please sign the sheet in the office or call Judy @ the office. St. Paul prayer partners stand ready to surround you with prayer!

## TEXT MESSAGES

If you would like to receive text messages with reminders and special announcements, please sign up for the St. Paul Texting Service by completing the following:  
Send a text to 81010

## Newsletter & Announcements

Please send any announcements or articles for the February newsletter to [stpaulpontiac@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulpontiac@gmail.com) by January 23.

Announcements for the bulletin are due by 9 am Thursday mornings.

### Birthdays

Joel Rapp - Jan. 1  
Tenley Westergreen - Jan. 4  
Steve Rapp - Jan. 13  
Lori Hyde - Jan. 15  
Sue Garfinkle - Jan. 15  
Peggie Schneeman - Jan. 15  
Shelly Heller - Jan. 18  
Jessica Mills - Jan. 18  
Judy Sykes - Jan. 19  
Scott Bauknecht - Jan. 20  
Mary Lou Bevers - Jan. 21  
Michelle Schultz - Jan. 22  
Greg Putnam - Jan. 27  
Mylan Longstreet - Jan. 29

### January Church Events

Jan. 2 - Bibles and Bagels @ 9:30 am @ Edinger's  
Jan. 5 - Chicago Folk Service @ 10 am  
Jan. 9 - Mission/Property meeting @ 10 am  
Jan. 12 - Worship Service - 10 am -  
Jan. 12 - Red Bag Sunday - Mission & Vision (ELCA)  
Jan. 13 - New Bible Study starts @ 6 pm  
Jan. 15 - LEO @ 5:30 pm—  
Jan. 16 - Rebecca Circle @ 1:30 pm - Church  
Jan. 19 - Worship Service - 10 am  
Jan. 20 - Council Meeting - 6 pm (Annual Reports Due)  
Jan. 23 - Newsletter Articles Deadline  
Jan. 26- Worship Service - 10 am  
Jan. 27 - Bible Study @ 6 pm

### ANNIVERSARIES

Jim & Becky Edinger - Jan. 1  
Sam, Sr. & Ellen Lambert - Jan 13  
Joe & Dawn Boitnott - Jan. 24  
Sam, Jr. & Kris Lambert - Jan. 25

#### St. Paul Lutheran Church

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