



THE EPISTLE

Volume 10 Issue 9

St Paul Lutheran Church

September 2011

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Thursday of Pentecost 9 — August 18, 2011

The State of the Church

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When undertaking a discussion about faith practices, as we did when over a number of months we looked at the marks of discipleship (quick... can you name them?), and beginning a discussion on mission and outreach, sharing the good news, it is important to know the lay of the land so to speak. We have to know what the church looks like from a demographic and sociological standpoint. One of the best people to look at is the researcher George Barna. His research gives an excellent snapshot of the American church life. He has been at this task of collecting and assessing data for over twenty years. He is able to see trends and show just how different life is now than twenty years ago. He is able to mark general trends, differences among generational, gender, racial, ethnic and regional lines, and he can make distinctions between various faith "tribes." Of course, things have changed significantly. But it is important to know where things are so we can reflect on how we, even our congregation in Morgantown, WV, can address them.

For general trends, when we compare the marks of discipleship to these trends, we find substantial overlap in several religious behaviors tracked by the Barna Group. Remember, the six marks of discipleship are Praying, Weekly Worship, Bible Reading, Service, Spiritual Friendships, Giving. Bible reading (which includes issues of education and study), weekly worship and service all have some major downward trends. Barna found:

- Currently an estimated 40% of adults read the Bible during a typical week outside of church events (a 5% drop).
- Slightly less than one out of every five adults (19%) donates some of their time in a typical week to serving at a church (an 8% drop)
- On any given Sunday, about 15% of adults can be expected to show up in a Sunday school class (another 8% drop).
- Since 1991, attendance has receded by nine percentage points, dropping from 49% in 1991 to 40% in 2011.
- In 1991, just one-quarter of adults (24%) were unchurched. That figure has ballooned by more than 50%, to 37% today.

As a side note, it is clear that giving is dropping, as a whole certainly since attendance is going down but almost just as certain as a percentage of income. Barna did not measure this religious behavior however.

These statistics raise very interesting questions. When it comes to many conceptions of mission, many folks it is simply about providing the right programs and services, with the right liturgies and attendance will pop back up. But because many of these downturns are connected with the marks of discipleship, I would argue that the issue is not market-driven. We should not simply become a spiritual version of Cracker Barrel going around “pleasing people” through various means. Instead I would suggest that the issue is identity-centered. We are what we do. Michael Foss points again and again to these practices, which make a statement about the lives of the Christians who engage in them. If we see a decline in these practices, we will see a decline in the church.

Religious beliefs were also looked at in these general trends. The Barna Group found that only three of eight beliefs that have been tracked have changed significantly over the past twenty years.

- The percentage of adults who can be classified as born again Christians, based on their belief that they will experience eternal salvation based on their commitment to Jesus Christ, personal confession of sins, and acceptance of Christ as their savior, has risen by five percentage points. In 1991, the national estimate was 35% of adults met those criteria. Currently, 40% of adults can be classified as born again.
- When asked to choose one of several descriptions of God, the proportion who believe that God is “the all-knowing, all-powerful and perfect Creator of the universe who still rules the world today” currently stands at two-thirds of the public (67%). That represents a seven point drop from the 1991 level.
- The biggest shift has been in people’s perceptions of the Bible. In 1991, 46% of adults strongly affirmed that “the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches.” That has slumped to just 38% who offer the same affirmation today.

Interestingly, the other five beliefs that remained relatively unchanged are “the percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christian (84%); those who say their religious faith is very important in their life today (56%); those who have made a “personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in my life today” (65%); the proportion who agree that Satan is not a living entity but merely a symbol of evil (56%); those who strongly believe that they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others who believe differently (25%).”

What is fascinating to me is those who feel personally responsible to share their religious beliefs. At twenty-five percent, that means that over the past twenty years, only one in four people have felt a responsibility to share their faith. How might we engage the religious practices to encourage positive change in religious beliefs?

Despite all of these changes, most for the worse, there is still reason to hope. In the midst of doom and gloom predictions, we have the promise that Jesus will care for the church, that he will be with us to the end of the age. It might not always look the way we think it should, but it will always be around.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Brian

FROM THE SUMMER INTERN

One of my favorite teachers in high school was our chorus director, Dr. Orange. In four years many students develop very close relationships with him through chorus, show choir and musicals; and while I was only involved in the school musical for my last two years of high school, and chorus and show choir for the last year, I too developed a friendship with him. He always gave a pep talk before performances, nothing too sentimental, just the same type of stuff any director might tell a group of musicians.

On graduation day, when the senior choir gathered one last time to sing our high school's alma mater, Dr. Orange gave one last bit of wisdom: "I won't tell you goodbye, because that sounds too final. You're always more than welcome to come back. See you later..."

And so, while August 14th may have been my last Sunday on "staff" at Saint Paul, I don't think of it as goodbye as much as "See you later!" You'll likely see me in the parking lot helping out before WVU football games, or downtown if you choose to venture down to the chapel, and while I won't be on the rotation, I will certainly be available to fill in as worship assistant throughout the year if necessary. I have one more year here in Morgantown and WVU, so you will surely bump into me somewhere.

Many of you have asked me "what now?" Well, as of the posting of grades for the summer session, I can happily say that I am a mere 25 credits away from graduating from WVU, so the end is in sight, and I will graduate on time next spring assuming nothing explodes or implodes.

As far as seminary, and becoming a Pastor, I have chosen to continue the path of discerning a call toward public ministry. I have met with several people at the synod office and by the time you read this, I will likely have submitted the first round of forms and paperwork to them. From there, it's a variety of different interviews and evaluations before a decision is made by the Southwestern PA/West Virginia-Western Maryland candidacy committee to allow me to enter into candidacy and begin seminary.

If all works out, and I am approved to begin seminary education, I would start in fall of 2012, most likely at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

I'd like to thank all of you for the role you've played in giving me an understanding of congregational ministry here at Saint Paul. Whether it be through thoughtful conversation, or simply being a smiling face in the pews, each and every one of you has had an impact on me this summer. Through thick and thin, I am grateful for the experiences I have had as part of this internship, and I know many of them will continue to be meaningful for the rest of my life.

So again, if you see around town or around campus, please don't hesitate to say hello. I'll be praying for the people of this congregation and I hope that you will do the same for me.

See you later, Jono



COME SING WITH US!!!

Now is a perfect time to join the choir. Rehearsals run from 7-8 PM Wednesdays in the balcony. A warm welcome is guaranteed! Call Beth at 304-284-8615 if you have any questions.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to all who helped with VBS this year:

Jono Adams	Subha Arthur	Brian Bennett	Mary Lynne Bennett
Debby Borrelli	John Borrelli	Mary Lee Cushing	Logan Cushing
Ammelin Grosso	Mary Haas	LuAnn Hartley	Ineke Knudsen
Grethe Myles	Faith Riegel ("Israelite teen" and "Scraps")		
Elaine Sampson	Joanne Seasholtz	Kim Shockley ("Israelite woman")	
Larry Springer ("Jesus")		Emily Stiles	Connie Toffle
Carl Werntz ("St. Peter")		Sandy Wildman	

To the church council and Lutheran Men in Mission for providing dinners;

To all who donated food and supplies;

To the youth for painting decorations;

To Mr. Dalton for his extra cleanup;

To parents who attended and helped.

And a special Thank You to Tamara Riegel for coordinating everything!

Great Job To All!!!

On Thursday, September 1, 2011, 7 p.m. St. Paul Lutheran Church continues a new educational offering that we like to call



Ok... there is no name as of yet, but with the end of the Tuesday evening bible study, we are beginning something new. The first Thursday of every month we will be gathering for a night of education that might be like bible study but will not be a pure bible study. We might look at something in the bible, or an aspect of our life and what scripture and Christian tradition might say. We are hoping for a rotation between biblical, thematic and social issues. Every month is meant to be self-contained. If you can't make it one month don't let it worry you about the next one. We will have coffee and some sweet treats available. We are also in the process of trying to procure child care. If you are interested in helping with child care, please let Pastor Brian know.

In September our topic will be: ***Doctrine of Creation & Environmental Stewardship.***

Please come and join us.



Women of the ELCA - St. Paul Unit

Wednesday – September 14, 2011

7:00 pm in the church fellowship hall (**last** evening meeting for summer)

Theme: To Follow and To Serve: The Gospel of Mark **Theme verse:** Mark 1:15

On Aug. 10, 2011, the devotional bible study based on Philippians 4:4 was led by Alice Robbins. April 14, 2012 was chosen to host the spring 2012 Monongalia Valley-Mountain Cluster meeting of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod Women of the ELCA. Discussion was held regarding the theme for the Cluster meeting. We will continue the theme discussion at the next meetings. The theme will be announced in the February 2012 *Lutheran Lines* edition.

Announcements:

- *Lutheran Woman Today* has changed its title beginning with the September issue to: *Gather: for faith and action*.
- All sewn LWR School bags and all school kit items are due by **Sunday, September 11, 2011**.

The St. Paul unit will assemble the school kits at our September meeting. Please see the LWR tally board in the narthex for items still needed.

Include the following items in each School Kit :

Four 70-sheet notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper approximately 8" X 10½"; **no loose-leaf paper**

One 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other

One pencil sharpener

One blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)

Five unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band

Five ballpoint pens (no gel ink); secure together with a rubber band

One box of 16 or 24 crayons (Crayola brand)

One eraser approximately 2 1/2" long

One sturdy drawstring backpack-style cloth bag approximately 14" X 17" with shoulder straps (no standard backpacks)

Do not add other items or leave out any of the items listed. All items should be new and in good condition. Please do not donate items with any religious symbols, messages or with your congregation's name. Please do not donate any items decorated with a U.S. flag, patriotic or military symbols, or references to the armed forces, including camouflage.

News from Council

The St. Paul Congregational Council met Thursday, August 11th and would like to share the following highlights with you:

- Last month council voted to hire the accounting firm of Toothman Rice for a trial period of six months to write the congregation's checks. Dave Stiles will begin working with accountants from the firm the week of August 14th.
- We received one applicant for the Huber scholarship, so council voted to grant the scholarship to Lucas Price.

Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving

The Prayer List for St. Paul

In The Small Catechism, Martin Luther writes: The Second Commandment: You are not to misuse the name of your God. What is this? Answer: We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God's name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. Following this command to call on God's name in every situation, we list her intercessions to be lifted up in the midst of our congregation's worship.

Person for whom we intercede:

Marty Ferer
Ann Cloonan
Betty Kelso
Mary Rancinger
Joe Shibley
Virginia Harris
Jim Tucker
Jim Craig
Bob Snider
Dana Fox
Alana Mears
Peggy Soderberg
Mary Kretzer
Abram Billig

For what we are praying:

Melanoma
Illness
Surgery
Illness
Heart and lung
Health concerns
Parkinson's
Cancer
Myotonic dystrophy
Surgery
Lyme disease
Cancer
Heart
Deployed to Afghanistan

THE GREEN CORNER:



Appalachia Rising!
Washington, DC Sept. 25 - 27, 2010

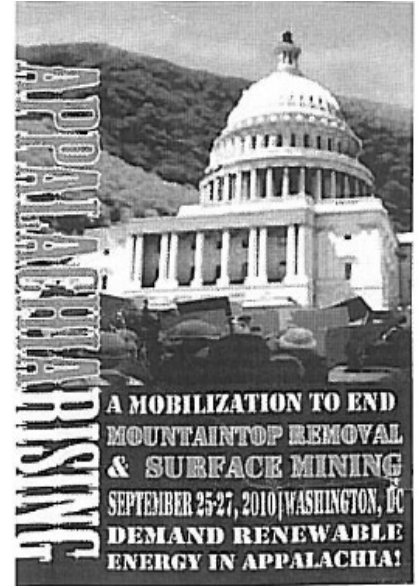
Join advocates from across America in DC for Appalachia Rising: Voices from the Mountains, a weekend conference culminating in a day of mass mobilization calling for the abolition of mountaintop removal and surface mining.

Sept. 25-26: Appalachia Rising: Voices from the Mountains. This DC conference will grow the national movement against strip mining with a weekend of strategizing, workshops and cultural events. Thousands will learn about the challenges Appalachia faces. We'll plant the seeds of a sustainable, just and prosperous Appalachia.

Sept. 27: Appalachia Rising culminates in a day of mass mobilization in Washington, DC. We will call for the abolition of mountaintop removal and surface mining. Mountain community residents, students, youth, families, celebrities, underground miners, activists and artists will converge on DC for a permitted rally. For those who choose, there may be an opportunity for non-violent action and dignified civil disobedience.

Register today at <http://appalachiarising.org/>. The \$50 registration fee covers **housing, food, workshops, and trainings**. Scholarships are available, but organizers ask that you try to raise your own funds.

OVEC is helping to organize travel to the conference and the permitted rally. We need folks willing to drive vans and passengers for the vans. We need folks willing to organize local carpools. Get active, get going to DC!



Please contact Stephanie Tyree if you want to help drive a van, help fill a van or need a ride. Please call right away.

We can only make this happen with your help. If you can't go, please donate to help offset van rental costs.

Call Stephanie at 304-574-6121 or e-mail her at stephanie@sludgesafety.org



YOUTH GROUP

All youth in grades 6-12 are welcome to join us at our regular meetings on the 2nd Sunday evening each month!



Sunday, Sept. 11 5-7 pm
Dinner provided





RALLY DAY FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL — SEPTEMBER 11TH

If you would like to teach this year, please see Tamara Riegel!!

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS ON SEPTEMBER 18TH

From the Piecemakers: Even though we have not been able to use the church building very often this summer, we have managed to send out over 125 quilts and quite a few lap robes this year. With just a few workers that is quite an accomplishment. Mrs. Failinger has sent us another 30 quilt tops. Without her help we would not be able to get too much done. I know people think the Piecemakers can take on several other tasks but without more hands on help that is not possible. We would love to do it but our main task is making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. Tuesday evening class is supposed to be a learning and refresher experience. They already helped with making the school bags for WELCA. We can not get enough WELCA members to sew the bags. Our closet is full of material, some of it has been there for years but we do not have enough help to work it up. The janitor's closet is not the ideal place to store material and our good sewing machines. It is very damp and has flooded again recently. We could use a couple packs of Damprit. The handful of workers are doing all they can already. Don't get me wrong, we love our mission of helping the less fortunate and enjoy making the quilts. Some of they are really nice. Please reconsider helping out on Fridays if you have any time at all. You need not be experienced. We are even recruiting workers from outside of St. Paul. Again we thank you for your support, we could not do it without you and God's Grace.



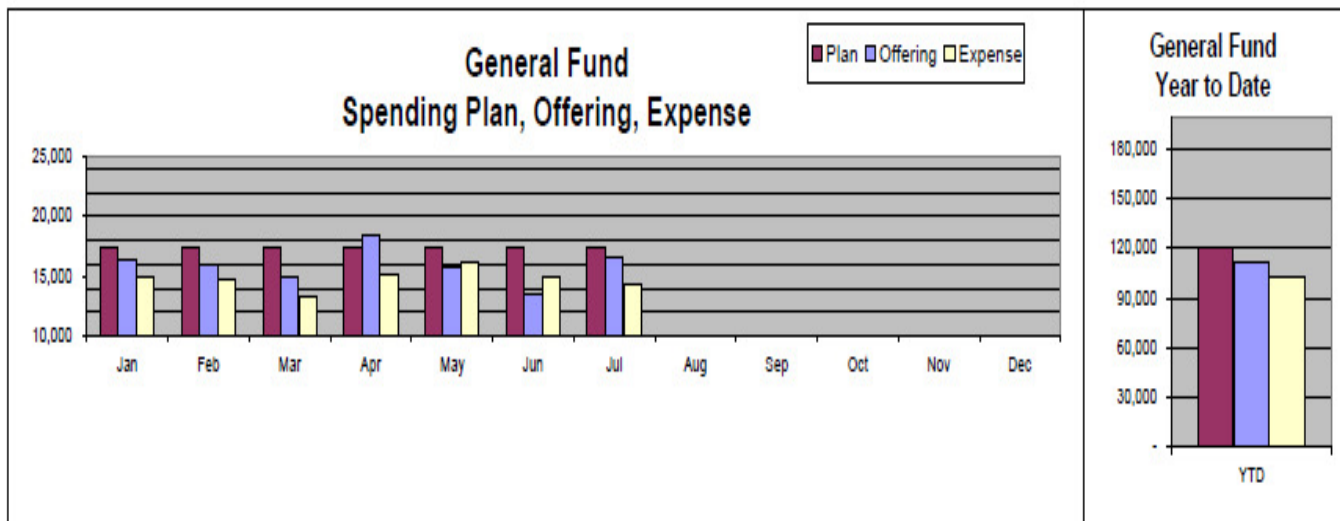
ATTENTION MARRIED COUPLES: Time is running out to sign up for your fall Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend. The September Weekend has filled; however, you may contact us at the information below to be added to the waiting list. If you act quickly, there is still room for you at the final 2011 Weekend scheduled for **Nov. 4-6, 2011 at Park Inn by Radisson-Sharon in West Middlesex, PA**. This popular facility with a tropical atrium has a king bed and an in-room hot tub in each guest room. It is located just an hour north of Pittsburgh. Marriage Encounter Weekends are designed to allow you to take time off from daily pressures and responsibilities to search out and discover a warmer, closer, more joyful relationship with each other. Weekends run from Friday at 8 PM to Sunday at 5 PM. Two nights lodging, 5 meals for each of you, and all supplies are included. There is a \$45 per couple registration fee, plus toward the end of the weekend you will be given an opportunity to make a confidential contribution of whatever amount you wish toward the continuation of the program. Register now to avoid being disappointed--simply go to the website: www.GodLovesMarriage.org and sign up. For questions, or if you would like a brochure with registration form mailed to you, contact PA Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166.

Treasurer's Report

July 2011

St Paul Lutheran Church Plan and Expense (General)

		2010 Year												
		End	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
General		7,224	8,211	9,862	11,644	14,644	14,505	13,374	15,765	-	-	-	-	-
Restricted														
	Regular	17,578	16,850	17,008	16,892	18,304	17,197	16,942	16,982					
	Special	4,155	4,485	4,485	5,818	5,818	5,530	5,856	5,856					
	Standing	38,778	37,512	38,519	39,710	38,747	38,248	36,999	37,659					
	Use of Church	278	655	705	831	957	1,082	1,307	1,437					
		60,789	59,302	60,718	63,051	63,826	62,058	61,104	61,933	-	-	-	-	-
Bank Balance (Centra)		74,189	67,513	70,580	74,695	78,470	76,562	74,479	77,699					
	Plan	17,314	17,314	17,314	17,314	17,314	17,314	17,314	17,314					
	Offering	16,364	16,066	14,991	18,369	15,739	13,553	16,629						
	Expense	14,900	14,782	13,338	15,068	16,175	14,965	14,335						



2011 Average Sunday Offering	3,724	2011 Average Sunday Offering	3,724
2011 Projected Average Sunday Offering (Spending Plan)	4,040	2011 Average Weekly Expense	3,432
	(316)		292
July Offering in excess of Expense	2,294	General Fund Balance	15,765
YTD Offering in excess of Expense	8,148	Average Offering 2004 - 2010	3,631

SERVING ST. PAUL September 2011	LAY ASSISTANTS	LECTORS	ACOLYTE-CRUCIFER	USHERS	NURSERY WORKERS	COUNTERS
4th 10:00 AM	M. Haas	E. Melby	AJ Bartlett S. Bartlett	E & C Melby T & F Potter	Gillen Family	S. Leonard L. Springer
11th 10:00 AM	M. Sampson	S. Price	S. Ford-Werntz E. Stiles	G & K Kullman L. Springer	Gillen Family L. Cushing	S. Price K. Gillen
18th 10:00 AM	S. Woodruff	B. Peters	G. Riegel F. Riegel	J & S McCulla LA Hartley	Carver Family E. Stiles	D. Borrelli A. Fremour
25th 10:00 AM	D. Borrelli	M Kirkpatrick	Katie Smith Kyle Smith	Kyle Smith P. Smith K. Powell	Peters Family	S Kirkpatrick M. Bartlett
Oct. 1st 10:00 AM	S. Woodruff	T. Potter	B. Peters S. Peters	T & F Potter L & L Paulson	M L Bennett A Grosso	K. Powell L. Paulson

ALL WORSHIP ASSISTANTS: If you and/or your family know of dates you will be away from St. Paul - PLEASE - contact Debby Borrelli (304-292-1455 or jleku@comcast.net) with those dates. (Worship schedules are due by the 18th of the previous month; i.e. the Sept. schedule will be finished by Aug. 18th, etc.) Also, the church office always has my contact information.



**Deadline for next
month's newsletter
is the September 18th!!!**

**If you cannot serve, please find your
replacement! Thanks!!**

September 2011

Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">11</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">10:00 AM Service 6:30 PM Mom's Bible Study Rally Day</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">12</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">13</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">10:00 AM Bible Study</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">14</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">7:00 PM Choir 7:00 PM WELCA</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">15</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">16</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">10:00 AM Piecemakers</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">17</p>																																																																																											
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<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">25</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Service 6:30 PM Mom's Bible Study Circle of Friends</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">26</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">8:00 AM LMM (Shoney's)</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">27</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">10:00 AM Bible Study</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">28</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">7:00 PM Choir</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">29</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">30</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">10:00 AM Piecemakers</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red; margin: 0;">31</p>																																																																																											

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