



# THE EPISTLE

Volume 8 Issue 1

St Paul Lutheran Church

January 2009

**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING  
JANUARY 18TH AFTER THE 10:00 AM SERVICE  
LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED**

## FROM THE PASTORS DESK

Monday of Advent 3

Dec. 15, 2008

*On the Word of God*

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

From the reading appointed<sup>1</sup> for the Wednesday of the first week of Advent:

**1 Thessalonians 2:13-14a** *We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.* <sup>14</sup> *For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea...*

What is the relation between Scripture, as we have it in the Old and New Testaments, and the Word of God? Are they equated, one with another? Or is there perhaps a distinction that must be maintained? And if this is the case, then what must we say about Scripture's inspiration, and authority in our lives?

In the passage quoted above, Paul writes to the congregation at Thessalonica, giving thanks for their reception of the Word of God. What exactly is this Word? 1 Thessalonians is generally thought to be the earliest of Paul's writings dating possibly to 51 A.D., which would make it the oldest written document of the New Testament, given that the Gospel according to St. Mark doesn't get written until 70 A.D. at the earliest. Paul is writing to Thessalonica about his previous visit where they received the Word of God. His letter here leads us to understand that the Word of God is rooted in a spoken word, and this spoken word leads the Thessalonians to imitate the churches of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's understanding of God's Word coming in a spoken fashion, being delivered by human beings, is in complete resonance with the Old Testament's understanding of "the Word of the Lord." There the Word of the Lord is almost exclusively understood to be something that is spoken, something that is

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<sup>1</sup> *LBW*, "Daily Lectionary" p. 179

active since it comes<sup>2</sup> to prophets and leaders of Israel. The Word of God is not then simply to be equated with the text of Scripture.

Luther articulates this very clearly, in that the Word of God is primarily a message, not just a book, and for Luther this message centered on Jesus Christ. For Luther, this message could be only one thing, namely that in Jesus Christ, God brings about our justification by grace through faith. Luther criticizes any book of the Bible that he does not feel communicates this message. In fact, Luther thought that the books of James and Revelation had no place in the canon because he believed these books utterly lacked the gospel. He, however, does not take it upon himself to excise these books from Scripture. Instead, Luther suggests that within Scripture, there is a canon which should be elevated above the rest. One could even say that for Luther, while the Gospel is contained within Scripture, not all Scripture contains the Gospel.

Luther would also point to the Word of God existing outside the written page. In his treatise, *On the Councils and Church*, Luther points to seven marks which identify the Church, the holy Christian people. The first of these marks is precisely the “possession of the holy Word of God.” Luther writes,

“... this holy possession is the true holy possession, the true ointment that anoints unto life eternal, even though you cannot have a papal crown or a bishop’s hat, but must die bare and naked, just like children (in fact, all of us), who are baptized naked and without any adornment. But we are speaking of the external word, preached orally by men like you and me, for this is what Christ left behind as an external sign, by which his church, or his Christian people in the world, should be recognized.”<sup>3</sup>

In this entire discussion, perhaps the Gospel of St. John says it clearest, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1,14) The Word of God is first and foremost Jesus Christ, the one crucified and resurrected and who comes to us still in the Sacraments, preaching and Scripture.

Sadly as time goes on, Lutherans move away from Luther’s understanding of the Word of God being the proclamation of the Gospel. We have moved toward a very different understanding of Word being identical with the written and inspired text. Whereas Luther thought Scripture was to be believed because of *what* it said, these later Lutherans (who have come to be identified with Lutheran orthodoxy) thought that the Scriptures should be believed simply *because* it was said by Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

Both Luther’s and the later theologians’ views of the Word of God raise a crucial issue for us today. Wherein lies the authority of Scripture and how do we let Scripture order our lives as a Christian holy people, the Church? The only stance a Lutheran can take and remain faithful to a confessional Lutheranism is that Scripture is our norming norm (*norma normans*, as it is often called in the confessions), that is, the chief authority by which we judge and rule our life together.

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew verb “haya” which is used in these passages “the Word of the Lord came to me...” can also be translated “the Word of the Lord happened to me.” “haya” is a word of being, becoming, existing or happening. Evidently God’s Word is not static and dead, but alive and bringing about transformation that seeks righteousness.

<sup>3</sup> Luther, M. 1999, c1966. *Luther's works, vol. 41 : Church and Ministry III* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Vol. 41 (Vol. 41, Page 149). Fortress Press: Philadelphia

<sup>4</sup> Braaten, Carl, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1983, p. 6

In some circles of Protestantism, the notion that Scripture is literally inerrant is advanced to bolster the authority of Scripture. Simply put, inerrancy is the belief that the Bible, down to every historical detail, is completely accurate and is free of contradictions and imperfections, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. At first glance, the idea of inerrancy might appear to solve questions of interpretation since most who claim that the text of Scripture is inerrant would then claim that every verse is as important as every other. But we are soon faced with difficult questions. Which version of Scripture is inerrant? Some claim that the King James Version, as the product of centuries of the Holy Spirit's work, is the only version that is inerrant. Others claim that the collection of Greek manuscripts known as the *Textus Receptus*, which is the basis for Luther's German translation, the King James Version, and the earliest English translation, is the inerrant version. Finally, recognizing that there are thousands of Greek manuscripts, some scholars claim that it is only the original manuscripts which are inerrant. None of these positions are without problems. For example, if the King James Version is inerrant, is the Word of God then bound to a particular language and historical context? Or if only the original manuscripts are inerrant, and they have been lost, then what authority—if any—do the existing flawed copies have?

Aside from these problems, inerrancy does not do away with the difficult work of interpretation. For example Within even among advocates of Creationism, who profess the inerrancy of Scripture, there are significant disagreement about what Scripture says about the age of the earth. To muddy the waters even more, not all who would claim to subscribe to inerrancy are Creationists. In other words, adhering to the inerrancy Scripture does not simplify anything or reduce disagreements.

While Lutherans of the ELCA sort generally do not espouse inerrancy, nothing would prohibit them from doing so. Granted a Lutheran understanding of inerrancy could not simply replicate the general Protestant understanding of inerrancy. A Lutheran understanding of inerrancy must encompass the notion that the Word of God refers to more than just the Scriptures. The Word of God is the message addressed to us in Christ Jesus by God. Furthermore, a Lutheran inerrancy would still recognize a canon within the canon. Not every verse or passage has equal weight. Passages that proclaim the Gospel message have more authority than those where the Gospel content is minimal or non-existent.

In the end, we must understand that Scripture has authority in our lives because it bears the message of God's redemptive activity in the world. Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of that redemption. May we boldly proclaim his name to the world, and may the Word of the Lord happen to us...

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Brian

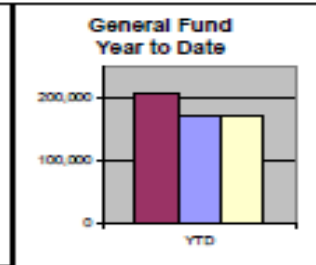
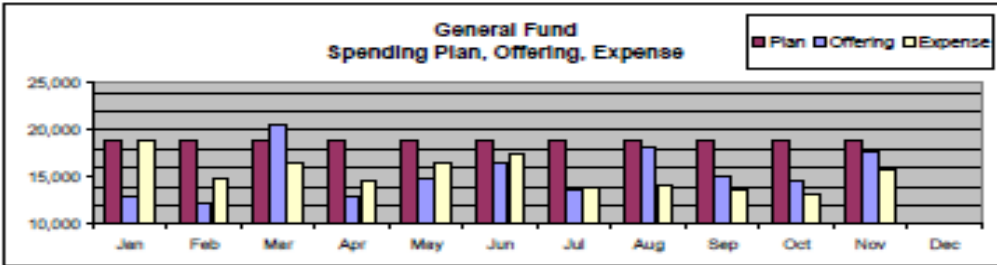
### **Sunday School for Twos and Threes**

If you have a two or three-year-old, you are invited to join a "Mommy (or Daddy) and me" Sunday School class. Class will begin on January 11th, and will be held in the nursery room. Classes will be informal, with Bible story work mixed with playtime. Come join us!

# Treasurer's Report

## St Paul Lutheran Church Statement of Revenue and Expense with Spending Plan

November 2008	November				Year to Date			Year to Date	
	General Fund	Spending Plan	+/- of Plan	% of Plan	General Fund to Date	Total Plan to Date	% of Plan	Restricted Fund to Date	Total Funds to Date
<b>Support and Revenue</b>									
Contributions	17,835	18,823	(1,188)	94%	189,486	207,053	82%	39,827	189,486
Designated/Restricted									39,827
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>17,835</b>	<b>18,823</b>	<b>(1,188)</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>189,486</b>	<b>207,053</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>39,827</b>	<b>209,113</b>
<b>Expenses</b>									
Designated/Restricted		245				2,452		3,320	3,320
Congregational Council	148	0			789	0		0	0
Benevolences	1,584	3,854	(2,270)	41%	22,283	36,594	61%	0	22,283
Church Mortgage	568	618	(48)	0%	6,272	6,778	93%	0	6,272
Committee - Christian Education	67	350	(283)	19%	2,328	5,250	44%	0	2,328
Committee - Fellowship	22	79	(57)	28%	475	1,178	40%	0	475
Committee - Staff Support	0	0	0	0%	28	30	88%	0	28
Committee - Outreach	462	183	299	284%	2,279	2,188	104%	0	2,279
Committee - Property	98	325	(228)	29%	1,158	3,575	32%	0	1,158
Committee - Resource	0	0	0	0%	578	200	289%	0	578
Committee - Stewardship	0	0	0	0%	0	100	0%	0	0
Committee - Worship & Music	199	485	(286)	41%	5,104	5,942	86%	0	5,104
Insurance	626	272	354	304%	3,565	3,488	102%	0	3,565
Building Operation	1,725	2,087	(362)	83%	19,381	24,061	81%	0	19,381
Office Operation	379	582	(203)	65%	5,330	8,402	63%	0	5,330
Parish Communications	87	185	(98)	47%	1,743	2,085	84%	0	1,743
Payroll	9,578	9,335	243	103%	98,172	102,882	96%	4,224	102,398
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>15,740</b>	<b>18,578</b>	<b>(2,837)</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>189,478</b>	<b>203,000</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>7,544</b>	<b>176,232</b>
<b>Excess of Support and Revenue Over Expenses</b>	<b>1,895</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>1,650</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>4,053</b>		<b>32,083</b>	<b>32,880</b>



### Two Options for Today's Parishioners:

*NEW* - Electronic Giving Program

*Traditional* - Parish Envelope Program

#### A New Way to Give

Our church is embracing a giving option that may be more convenient for many of our parishioners - Electronic Giving. Beginning in January, this new giving option will work in the same manner as mortgages, loans payments, or insurance premiums that are automatically withdrawn from your checking or savings account.

To sign up for this new giving option and have your donations transferred electronically to the church account on a regular basis, please fill out an authorization form and return it to the church office. You choose the donation frequency (weekly or monthly) and the donation amount for each fund you wish to support.

#### Important Benefits of Electronic Giving

Electronic Giving makes life easier for you and yields very significant benefits for our church.

#### Benefits for You:

- The satisfaction of giving to God first
- Easier to fulfill stewardship commitments
- Strengthens participation and support in the church

- Allows you to contribute even when you're away
- Easier personal budgeting
- More secure than bringing cash or checks to church

#### Benefits for our Church:

- Cultivates consistent giving
- More predictable cash flow for better planning
- Less work for office staff
- Secure and easy cash maintenance

#### Traditional Choices Remain

All registered parishioners will continue to receive envelopes, including envelopes for special collections for a variety of needs. Parish collections will be taken each week as usual. Participants in the Electronic Giving program are asked to mark their envelopes "EFT" and place them in the collection basket.

If you do not currently use envelopes, please consider participating in either our envelope program or the Electronic Giving program. Our parish needs your consistent support.

## News from Council

The St. Paul Congregational Council met Thursday, December 11th, and we wish to share some of the highlights with you.

- Giving for the year to date is almost exactly even with expenses.
- Members are needed for the Audit Committee—Sue Cook has agreed to serve and council is looking for other members for the committee.
- Thank you's were received from Heifer International (youth group donation), and Glade Run, Mon County Habitat for Humanity, the Tour de Revs, and Chestnut Mountain Ranch (parking money).
- New carpet samples will be displayed at the January congregation meeting. Anyone who wishes is welcome to nominate other samples.
- Dave Stiles would like to form a committee to review the church's insurance policy and consider the possibility of changing insurers. Council is looking for people with knowledge/experience with insurance.

**FROM THE PIECEMAKERS:** The Piecemakers would like to thank everyone for their continuing support. We have sent 120 quilts to the warehouse in New Windsor, MD, this year. It has been a great year. We had the youth involved this summer making lap-robos for the nursing homes in this area. They made 16 lap-robos and we all had a very good time working with the young people. We have a great fellowship every Friday and we wish more of you could join us. We had a wonderful Christmas luncheon at the home of Helen Goryance. She really spoiled us fixing all the lovely dishes herself. We hope you are enjoying the Christmas quilts on display. We have a very dedicated group of workers and one does not have to be a quilter to help us with our projects of making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. We are taking a well deserved break until January 9th. We hope to see some new faces in our little group by then. We wish everyone many Christmas Blessings!

## Christmas Gifts

In this season of gift giving to family, friends and those less fortunate, we hope you will also consider your gift to St. Paul Lutheran Church. It is through the donations of every individual and family in the congregation that we are able to carry on our work. You can use our electronic giving option for both regular offerings and one-time gifts. To help us achieve a more consistent level of funding, we encourage using electronic giving for regular offerings. Please contact the church office for details.

## St. Paul Youth Group

... And the **WINNER** is ...Candy Custer The Quilt Raffle netted \$343 for the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering trip. Thank you to the Piecemakers for their donation and to everyone who purchased tickets!

January Youth Group meeting: **Sunday, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> – 5 to 7 pm**



**LYO Winter Event — Feb. 27 to March 1, 2009**

**Camp Hickory in Garrett County, MD**

## THE GREEN CORNER

### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

The global community may be more receptive to the need for a new, sustainable kind of development. As deforestation, species loss, greenhouse gas emissions, and overuse of water continue unchecked, critical environmental thresholds are being crossed, and scientists from many disciplines tell us that major crises now loom before the human family. Meanwhile, the single-minded focus on wealth production is producing such economic and environmental devastation, that two recent European conferences met to address the need for a united climate charter which will surpland the weak Kyoto Protocol (which the U.S. refused to validate with our own Sen. Byrd one of the leading opponents). Tom Friedman in his latest book is having second thoughts and reversing some of his "flat world" ideas of progress.

The idea of unfettered growth so necessary to sustain the "free market" mantra of individualism and a growing economy has imploded; the financial institutions from Wall Street are accepting government billions to sustain the very people who created the sub-prime, hedge-fund system. (Paul Paulson, Treasury Secretary was CEO of Goldman Sachs).

Isn't it time to question the "values" mantra? What can the public learn from the fact that jobs and food supplies are scarce? Could the industrial base become more sustainable with the input of a "renewable values" A concern for sharing earth's bounty in place of exploiting earth's resources? The result of questioning may lead to a renewed hope that we can all contribute to stewardship by taking individual responsibility to act instead of complain.

The first great flood ended with a rainbow, and mankind and all God's creatures were to prosper in peace. Today's world is not agrarian, but industrialized into global economics; the poorest of God's creation, the most defenseless, are left to migrate or die because industry requires land and minerals to drive its technology innovations from rockets to cell phones, all on the foundation of its fossil fuel energy supply.

Can the Inter-Faith Community somehow organize to propose a much-needed equation to the sanctimonious veneer for policies that have helped the rich get richer while dismantling the environment protections and ignoring the needs of the middle class and the poor.

Faith is more than a desire for money or power, as measured by economic success, in hopes of a "trickle down" theory. What our faith can give us is the hope that we, as individuals, can begin within our own St. Paul family, to pray for God's guidance in planning a mission to uphold His covenant to prosper and achieve peace through community. To realize we are all passengers on spaceship Earth and we can find solutions to insure that all are precious passengers. We can take various options for stewardship but first comes a commitment. Steve Woodruff has material that can guide us to becoming a Green Congregation. You can make a difference if you have hope and faith.



The new flower chart for 2009 is posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. It is a wonderful way to celebrate a special event, in memory of someone, or just to the glory of God, just put your name and dedication on the dates you chose. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

## Prayer Corner

One of the most important things we can do for others is to pray for them, not just generally, but especially for particular needs and interests that they have. . . "The great intercessors remain the men and women of secret influence in all communities, and to be mentioned in their prayers is incomparably more enriching than to be mentioned in their wills. (W.E. Sangster)

**Please pray for those in need. We ask you to include:**

### Illness

Lois Kleeb  
Brenda Bartlett  
Madge Hall  
Jared Schreiman  
Phyllis Henry  
Jan Green  
Jen Nestor  
Fred Stouffer  
Bob Snyder  
Nancy Hartley  
Karen Ford  
Norma Gnegy  
Jeffrey Cheney  
Linda & Kristen Kleeb  
Tom & Betty Kelso  
Phil Quarrier  
Philip Smith  
Ron Fortney  
Charlie Wodzinski  
Wil Gladfelter  
Sherry Fox  
Dorothy Hess  
Nina Brand  
Carolyn Walters  
Jared Schreiman  
Laura Bender

### Home Bound

Mary Hutchinson  
James Sharkey  
Virginia Sweitzer  
Rilla Tonon

### Grief

The family of:

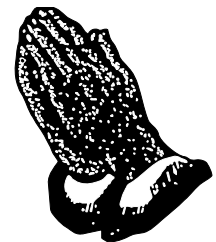
### Recuperation Active Duty

Sierra Gabbert      Rob Walters  
Karen Starkey      Brian Fox  
Sally Schwing      Jason Glass

### Wedding

### Family Concerns

St. Mark's Lutheran  
Clarksburg, WV  
Grace Lutheran  
Fairmont, WV



SERVING ST. PAUL January 2009	LAY ASSISTANTS	LECTORS	ACOLYTE-CRUCIFER	USHERS	NURSERY WORKERS	COUNTERS
4th 10:00 AM	M. Haas	G. Groce	E. Stiles E. Stiles	B & J Schreiman L & L Paulson	M. Bott-Hansmann McCulla Family	S. Price S. Gabbert
6th 7:00 PM Epiphany	S. Woodruff	G. Grosso	A. Grosso	E & C Melby	D. Ford-Werntz	
11th 10:00 AM	S. Woodruff	S. Price	E. Graham J. Borrelli	D & C Custer LA Hartley K. Powell	J. Graham S. Hollar	C. Henry T. Riegel
18th 10:00 AM	J. Lee	S. Bartlett	M. Bott-Hansmann AJ Bartlett	S. Bartlett S. Armstrong E & C Melby	K. Custer S. Rizzo	K. Powell B. Schreiman
25th 10:0 AM	D. Borrelli	T. Potter	M. McCulla K. Smith	J & S McCulla G & K Kullman	A Grosso M L Bennett	P. Cushing C. Toffle

If you are unable to serve please find your own replacement. Thank you!

# January 2009 Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                     December 08                      S M T W T F S                      1 2 3 4 5 6                      7 8 9 10 11 12 13                      14 15 16 17 18 19 20                      21 22 23 24 25 26 27                      28 29 30 31                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                     February 09                      S M T W T F S                      1 2 3 4 5 6 7                      8 9 10 11 12 13 14                      15 16 17 18 19 20 21                      22 23 24 25 26 27 28                 </div>					
<b>4</b> 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Service 11:45 AM Confirmation Class	<b>5</b> 	<b>6</b> 10:00 AM Bible Study 7:00 PM Epiphany Service	<b>7</b> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>8</b> 7:00 PM Council Meeting	<b>9</b> 10:00 AM Piece-makers	<b>10</b> 
<b>11</b> 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Service	<b>12</b> 	<b>13</b> 10:00 AM Bible Study 7:30 PM Jesus Over Java	<b>14</b> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>15</b> 	<b>16</b> 10:00 AM Piece-makers	<b>17</b> 10:00 AM Sunday School Teachers Meeting
<b>18</b> 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Service 11:45 AM Confirmation Class Circle of Friends Congregational Meeting	<b>19</b> 	<b>20</b> 10:00 AM Bible Study 7:30 PM Jesus Over Java	<b>21</b> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>22</b> 	<b>23</b> 10:00 AM Piece-makers	<b>24</b> 
<b>25</b> 9:00 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Service Linda Muhly Installation St. Marks	<b>26</b> 8:00 AM LMM (Shoney's)	<b>27</b> 10:00 AM Bible Study 7:30 PM Jesus Over Java	<b>28</b> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	<b>29</b> 	<b>30</b> 10:00 AM Piece-makers	<b>31</b> 

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CHURCH

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**Officers Of The Congregation**

President: Connie Toffle  
Vice President: Bill Graham  
Secretary: Misti Bartlett  
Treasurer: Dave Stiles  
Financial Secretary: Sandy Price

**Council Members**

Bill Graham	Larry Springer	Connie Toffle
Robert Zay	Steve Gabbert	Bruce Schreiman
Tamara Riegel	Lu Ann Hartley	Misti Bartlett
	Patrick Cushing	