



St. Paul's Epistles



St. Paul's Celebrates, Declares, and Demonstrates the Love of God in Jesus Christ to Sarver and Beyond.

Spending Advent in God's Winter Garden by Joel Hess*

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.” -[Isaiah 35:1-2](#)

Winter has advented again in Michigan. The once green and abundant farmlands have disappeared leaving dead crusty earth with desolate looking yellow stalks poking out here and there. If one didn't know there were other seasons, the land would look inhospitable except for the evergreens scattered about.

So it is with my little garden as well; dead, so it would seem. Nothing. Barren. Yet, my little garden is quite alive. Beneath the surface many bulbs busily store all the ingredients of Eden, waiting for a warm breeze to gently call their names. The garden looks dead, but I know otherwise. I have hope.

Our winter gardens provide a perfect image of the Church, during this season of Advent, I suppose. For she does resemble a wasteland sometimes. The grime of sin and death cover and seemingly suffocate God's people. Surely the world laughs when it looks at us like that Roman prefect who demanded that Saint Lawrence bring out the treasures of the Church. So the martyr deacon brought out God's people; the raggedy orphans and widows, decrepit old men, and weak looking fools. “Here are God's treasures!”, he exclaimed. They cooked him like a pig.

The Church can look dead and weak to the world, but we know otherwise. We know the one who planted her. She can look battered and dysfunctional like Corinth. She can look persecuted and on her heels as Europe. She can look like the old man I visited this past week who struggles with the effects of chemo; nausea running through his body, yet hungrily eats the ripe body and blood of the Lord, confessing his sins and rejoicing in forgiveness.

We are a garden planted by the Lord with the seed of Life. Beneath the charred dirt, that seed contains everything; life, forgiveness, the DNA of a perfect being. It works beneath the soil. Sometimes a sprout here and there. We see a glimpse of the future as sinners love one another, as a woman forgives her enemy, or an old man smiles while his body decays, as the Word is proclaimed and the body and blood are given out making roots deep in the lives of God's precious people as they wait for Spring, an evergreen.

Your church does not always look like you want it to, even on Christmas. Do not fear! All is well as long as the Word is being preached in its purity, and the Body & Blood are given out. She is quite alive! The Church is an article of faith after all. She will bloom. She is blooming.

Yet while we endure this winter, Spring has already sprung and is springing. So we sing, "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming." In the wasteland, from the dryland, in blood and water, on a cross and springing from a cold dark grave, a crocus has already bloomed; Jesus Christ. We are already singing!

We are not left with blind faith. As John says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...". We know this garden will bloom again and forever, because Christ is risen. More than 500 people saw Him. The sun has already risen and is rising. You are not dead but are living. As Dylan Thomas thoughtlessly sung, "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower Drives my green age..." Come, Lord Jesus.

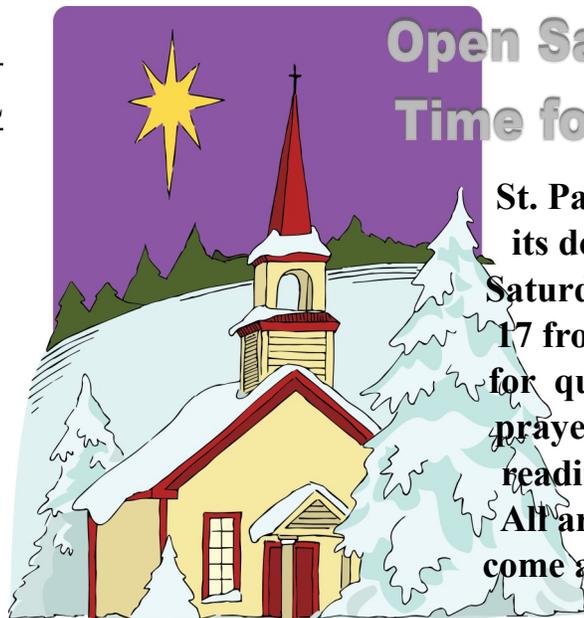
* <https://www.1517.org/articles/spending-advent-in-gods-winter-garden>

CHURCH COUNCIL



Anyone interested in running for Church Council should see Hobie Kenton or any member of council for more information.

A reminder to all current council members that your year end committee reports are to be turned in to the office by Sunday, December 4



Open Sanctuary Time for Prayer

St. Paul's will have its doors open on Saturday, December 17 from 10am-3pm for quiet individual prayer or scripture reading/devotions. All are welcome to come at your leisure.

Christmas Eve
Candle Light Services
3:00pm & 7:00pm
Christmas Day
10:10 am



Bag Night

The first Thursday of each month @6:30pm. Our next two Bag Nights will be on December 1 & January 5. Come to fold and cut bags or work on the loom.





Sunday, December 11

Following the
Worship Service

Join us for an afternoon of caroling to our shut-in members! We will meet at the close of worship for a soup lunch then go to member's homes to spread the good news through song. Dress warmly as we will be singing *outside* of their homes. If anyone is willing to make a pot of soup to share please let Melissa know. See you there!!



Annual Congregation Meeting

January 15 immediately following the worship service.

Donuts and Beverage will be served.

In the case of inclement weather the meeting will be moved to Jan. 22



Sunday, December 18

4:00pm

Join us for an afternoon of festive Christmas music performed by the

Kiski Valley Community Band

A free will offering will be accepted to benefit the TryLife Pregnancy Center of Lower Burrell.

Reception to follow.

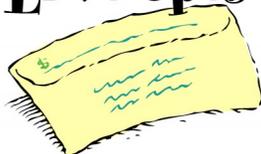


Luther's Corner

"This is the chief article, which separates us from all the heathen, that you... may not only learn that Christ, born of the virgin, is the Lord and Savior, but also accept the fact that he is your Lord and Savior, that you may be able to boast in your heart: I hear the Word that sounds from heaven and says: this child who is born of the virgin is not only his mother's son... for he was born for me, for the angel says, 'To you' is born the Savior. Then ought you to say, Amen, I thank thee, dear Lord."
-Martin Luther's Sermon on the Afternoon of Christmas Day 1530

2023 Offering Envelopes are located in the Narthex. If you don't see your name on a box see Melissa. A box will be assigned to you.

Offering Envelopes



Welcomed into the kingdom of God through the sacrament of Holy Baptism on November 6

Luke Joseph Cashell

Luke is the infant son of Marcus and Sarah Cashell.



DECEMBER 2022

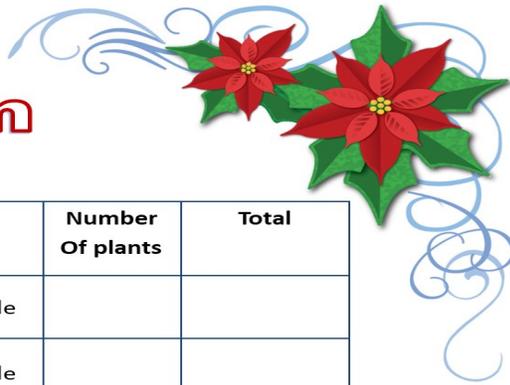
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Bag Night 6:30pm	2	3
4 2nd Sunday of Advent Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:10am Confirmation Class 6:00pm	5 Quilt Guild Christmas Party	6	7 Bell Choir 6:30pm	8	9	10
11 3rd Sunday of Advent Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:10am Christmas Caroling/Soup Lunch following worship Confirmation Class 6:00pm Deadline for Poinsettia orders and Christmas Toy Shoppe Donations	12 Church Council Meeting 6:30pm	13	14 Bell Choir 6:30pm	15 Worship & Music Meeting 10:00am	16	17 Open Sanctuary for Individual Prayer and Meditation
18 4th Sunday of Advent Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:10am Christmas Concert by the Kiski Valley Community Band 4:00pm Confirmation Class 6:00pm	19 Preschool Christmas Program	20	21 Ladies Guild Christmas Lunch @Nancy Altman's No Bell Choir	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 3:00pm & 7:00pm
25 Worship Service 10:10am MERRY CHRISTMAS	26	27	28 No Bell Choir	29	30	31



12/2 Clair Jones
 Diane Jones
 12/5 Sarah Reyer
 12/6 Monie Diller
 12/9 Allison Barnett
 12/11 Trent Craighton
 12/13 Don Diller
 Bev Miller
 12/14 Otto Fleske
 12/16 Morgan Kaminski
 12/17 Dakota Gannon
 12/18 Bruce Cooper
 12/19 Keith Hudak
 12/24 Tracy Young
 12/28 Carolyn Szebalskie
 12/29 Gabriella Lang
 12/30 Jessica Donatelli

1/1 Joanne Toy
 1/2 Hal Callithen
 Destin McCorkle
 1/3 Hannah Speer
 1/7 Karen Dietrich
 1/9 Melissa Beechey
 1/11 Nancy Hill
 Cole Lux
 1/13 Jennifer Jones
 Amy Penn
 1/15 Barb Gaydos
 1/16 Max Conglose
 Katie Rettig
 1/17 Allyson Pavlick
 1/22 Ashley Orzechowski
 1/23 Grant Buttery
 1/25 Amber Schmeider
 1/26 Roseanne McCollough
 Patty Muir
 1/28 Olivia Boyer
 Bob Gasper

Poinsettia Order Form



Size	Price	Color (circle)	Number Of plants	Total
6"	\$6	Red, White, Pink, Marble		
8"	\$10	Red, White, Pink, Marble		
			Total Amount	

Given to the Glory of God	By:
In Memory of:	By:
In Honor of:	By:



Deadline for orders:
Sunday, December 11

Please make checks payable to
St. Paul's. Place in the offering
plate in an envelope labeled
"Poinsettias"

Offering Breakdown for Month of November

Category	November Total	YTD Received	Annual Budget
General	11,160.22	115,897.39	
Loose	297.00	4,658.85	
Flowers	120.00	687.50	
Memorials	-	3,905.00	
Initial	-	116.00	
Advent	105.00	-	
Lenten	-	338.00	
Ash Wednesday	-	556.00	
Kindermusik	-	683.20	
Maundy Thur.	-	488.00	
Good Friday	-	257.00	
Other	20.00	2,659.76	
Total Current	11,702.22	130,246.70	168,511.00
Benevolence	1,152.00	11,982.95	11,000.00
Total Received	12,854.22	142,229.65	179,511.00
New Building	1,967.00	32,792.40	

There will be **NO**
January Newsletter

JOYFUL
Merry
AND
Blessed