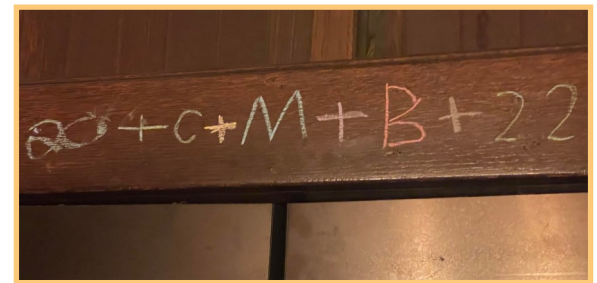




**MAGAZINE FOR SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
*CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR SINCE 1881*  
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## ON THE COVER:

The youth of St. John's helped mark and pray over the church doorway to celebrate The Epiphany and bless all who enter this year. The practice of chalking the doorway includes writing the numbers of the new year and the letters CMB which stand for the traditional names of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar) and the Latin blessing *Christus mansionem benedicat* ("May Christ bless this house")

## STAY CONNECTED

- Sign up for parish emails at [www.tinyurl.com/SJEemails](http://www.tinyurl.com/SJEemails)
- See What's Happening, read sermons, and more on St. John's website, [www.StJohnsStPaul.org](http://www.StJohnsStPaul.org)
- Like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/stjohnsstpaul](http://www.facebook.com/stjohnsstpaul)
- Read our blog, Epistles and Epiphanies, at [epistlesandepiphanies.wordpress.com](http://epistlesandepiphanies.wordpress.com)
- View archived worship services and formation classes on St. John's YouTube channel at [www.tinyurl.com/youtubeSJE](http://www.tinyurl.com/youtubeSJE)
- Access our online directory and parishioner portal, My St. John's, at [www.tinyurl.com/SJEportal](http://www.tinyurl.com/SJEportal).
- Stay connected on the go with our app! Download it [in the Apple Store](#) or [on Google Play](#).

## We welcome your contributions!

You are always *encouraged* to submit reflections and articles. Email [communications@stjohnsstpaul.org](mailto:communications@stjohnsstpaul.org) before next issue's deadline of :

**April 7**

Thank you!

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# FROM THE REVEREND JERED WEBER-JOHNSON

Dear Friends in Christ,

At the most recent meeting of our Spiritual Life committee, chair Lea Anne Schmidt asked us to reflect

on spiritual practices that nourish and sustain us, especially now during this long pandemic when much of our spiritual life is done physically apart from community. The responses were amazing and reflect how creative, faithful, and deep our leaders are at keeping spiritual life active and alive during these days of separation.

Some of the responses centered on traditional Christian practices that have nourished the faithful for centuries: praying the rosary or the Daily Office (such as Morning Prayer). Others described the role that Christian music played in helping get their day off on the right spiritual footing. Some of the responses were intergenerational: one person said their toddler remembers to include the family’s beloved pet each night in their prayers.

Another member demonstrated just how creative spiritual life can be. She attends worship via livestream and notes that our Prayers of the People, lengthy as they can be, makes concentrating wholeheartedly a tricky proposition. In the past, kneeling in church helped her focus, but at home in her living room, it didn’t always feel like a natural posture of prayer. So, she experimented and found a new way to stay deeply attuned by assuming the yoga posture of “downward facing dog” during the whole Prayers of the People. It really worked, she says, and the prayers came back into focus.

Our mission statement for St. John’s states our desire to grow “in the knowledge and love of” Jesus. We know that such growth depends in large part on nourishing our faith with spiritual habits and practices. This is the work of discipleship.

Disciples were those first followers of Jesus, men and women who heard Jesus’ teaching, who witnessed his healing and liberating ministry, and who felt a compelling call to leave behind life as they’d known it to follow him on his way. The life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus gave

examples of the kinds of habits that resonate most closely with his way of love: habits of turning, learning, praying, worshiping, blessing, going, and resting. Under these general headings are found a myriad of helpful practices – things like Bible study, *lectio divina*, evangelism, serving at a food pantry or supporting our Kayoro Clinic, knitting prayer shawls, attending Sunday worship or Morning Prayer, confession, visiting the homebound or bringing a meal to the sick, or even downward facing dog during the prayers of the people.

One of the surest ways people change are through the habits they keep. Habits not only shape our bodies, but by their repetition, create neural pathways and connections in our brain that strengthen a new way of being and thinking. Prayer, service, worship, and meditation change us both cognitively and spiritually and even on occasion physically. When we pray, “Build us up in the knowledge and love of Him,” we are asking for strength and support to do this very thing – to commit to the practices that will change us and through us change the communities and the world in which we live.

The Christian world is entering into the long season of repentance and preparation known as Lent. These days are often associated with the act of giving something up – and, simultaneously, many Christians find that taking on a practice of a spiritual habit is the perfect way to fill the space of the thing that has been let go. Fasting from alcohol? Perhaps in the space where you once had a nightcap each evening, write a list of gratuities from your day. Giving up screen time? Perhaps each time you reach for your phone to check social media or to play that video game, say a prayer for each member of your family by name, bringing the image of their face before your mind’s eye, and lifting them up to God.

*(continued next page)*



Whatever your spiritual practices are, or whatever you add during this season, I invite you to consider how these things are building you up in the knowledge and love of Christ. How are these practices nourishing and strengthening you in your work of following Jesus' way of love? How are you being transformed more and more into his likeness so that together, we can be sent out to heal a broken world, and show forth our service to God in our service to others?

In this issue of *The Evangelist* you'll hear more about discipleship, about the practices we keep that are part and parcel of our life as disciples of Jesus, and about programs and ministries at St. John's that are engaging our members in the work of discipleship. I hope you'll take the time to read and consider these and to take them to heart as inspiration in your own journey of faith. I'll see you in worship.

Faithfully,

## FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES: REDEFINING DISCIPLESHIP

By Katie Madsen, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry

For most of my life and ministry, the thing I have struggled with most is the idea of discipleship. How fitting then that discipleship is not only the theme for this issue of *The Evangelist* but also one of the four priorities Bishop Loya has called us to focus on this year in our ministries and faith communities. Am I being tested? I think I'm being tested...

Growing up, it seemed to me that to be a disciple, a Christ follower, went hand in hand with evangelism and conversion. The call to make new Christians, new disciples. (I do still in a way believe that this is my calling as the CYF Director.... more on that later.)

When I took the time to look up "discipleship," I was struck by the full definition. Discipleship is defined as "the condition or situation of being a disciple, a follower, or a student of some philosophy, especially a follower of Christ." I realized I had been going about discipleship all wrong. Discipleship is about the study; it is about the work we put in to learn more and more about something. There is no end to discipleship; it is a life long pursuit of learning and understanding.

There is no one who is better suited to discipleship than our youngest members, trust and believe. Each time I see their bright and shining faces they bombard me with a million questions, thoughts, and concerns about the lesson they are learning. They

worry not only about how these Biblical stories and lessons impact their own lives, but also the lives of their families, friends, community, and the world.

While COVID has dramatically changed the way the children and youth of St.

John's have been gathering over the last two years, one thing has stayed the same: their appetite to learn and understand more. No one challenges the way I think about a Bible story, a parable, a form of prayer, or the true meaning of a liturgy more than they do.

As babes, these young people join us open and willing to learn. They are not yet jaded by the many dark and challenging things that await them. They are our best resource when it comes to daily following Jesus. They create chaos, forcing older generations to stop and reevaluate. As the good book



Above, Sally Sand fields questions from the kids at a pre-pandemic Godly Play gathering. (They have just as many questions over Zoom, too!)

says: “from the mouth of babes.” This holy chaos (as I like to call it) always comes from a place of love for each other and for the world. The children challenge me to walk the walk; to acknowledge my lack of knowledge and my self-doubts, because they see right through my BS answers.

In this way I am, as we all are, called to create an open and welcoming space for these youngest minds to learn. We are making disciples each time they feel

more comfortable sharing, asking questions, and challenging us right back. I can't wait for the new questions they bring!

As we focus on discipleship this year I hope that each of you will take the time to talk to the smallest people in your lives. Ask them hard questions about deep and meaningful issues of faith. Their answers may surprise you! But I am almost certain you won't regret it.

## DISCIPLESHIP AND SACRIFICIAL LOVE

*By Cameron Williams, Coordinator of Member Ministries*

Following God is not easy. Yet, all of us have been called into discipleship; that is, God has called us to walk in Jesus' footsteps as a way of life. In Matthew 22:34, Jesus tells us the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Sounds easy, right? It's just a couple of things. But Jesus also did and said a lot of really cool, radical things. So what does it mean to be a disciple? To step into God's footsteps and walk the way of love?

The tricky part about that is love can look like a lot of different things. It can be lending a cup of sugar to your neighbor, or writing a heartfelt letter to your sweetheart for Valentine's Day. It can also look like exercising your voting rights, standing up against injustice, and risking your livelihood to defend the marginalized, downtrodden, and defeated.

When I became a part of the team at St. John's, my role was the New Member Minister. But to fully embody Bishop Loya's charge of Discipleship in ECMN's four priorities, it made sense to me to expand this ministry to not just new members, but everyone in our church and beyond.

In order for discipleship to work, it must be instilled in every aspect of our lives. Following Jesus is not just something that we as Christians do every Sunday. It means emulating the words and actions of Christ so that we may share in the vision of what God's Kingdom may look like here on earth. It means developing a habit of personal spiritual practices that help shape you and the world around

you. It means seeing the face of God in every person that you interact with in every moment. But that's not even the hard part.

Perhaps the most difficult part of aspiring to live a life in accordance with divine ideals is where we have to give our life in service of others. What makes the love of Jesus so compelling is that it is selfless. This radical, sacrificial, self-emptying love is known from the Greek word *kenosis*. Paul says in Philippians 2:4-7 “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, a being born in human likeness.”

In a similar vein, from his book *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, Thomas Jay Oord says “God must love. To put it as a double negative: God cannot not love. Kenotic love is an essential attribute of God's nature. God loves necessarily. The love creatures express is sporadic, occasional and contingent because creatures do not have eternally loving natures. But God's eternal nature is love, which means God could no more stop loving than stop existing.”

Could we imagine what it may look like to love one another uncontrollably? While, like everyone, I fall short of this ideal, it is my goal to do my best to model this in ministry. Perhaps if I am able to show even a smidgeon of this holy love each day, maybe it can be the start of a ripple. It is my hope that this ripple may go beyond St. John's, and continue to echo through our communities, and continue through our entire world.



# READING THE BIBLE: FROM KING JAMES TO THE INTERNET

By the Rev. Barbara Mraz

We don't often like being told what to do, and may resist the word "discipline," even though we know we should have more of it! So when we are told that we "should" have the discipline to read the Bible more frequently, in fact that it is our obligation, we might agree in theory but will this really change our behavior? Probably not.

What *would* make us change?

## GOOD REASONS

There are many good reasons for *not* reading the Bible. The Presbyterian writer Frederick Buechner summarizes them this way:

*The Bible not only looks awfully dull but some of it is.... written by many different people over a period of 3,000 years. It is a disorderly collection of sixty-odd books, which are often tedious, barbaric, obscure, and teem with contradictions and inconsistencies.....Over the centuries it has become hopelessly associated with tub-thumping evangelism and dreary piety, with superstition and moralizing, with ecclesiastical authoritarianism and crippling literalism.*

We could all add our own objections to this list: no time, family obligations, don't understand it, sexist and anachronistic, being spiritual but not religious, don't own one, no idea how to go about it.

## KEEPING IT REAL

How do you begin reading the Bible in a way that might work for you?

**"Do not start at the beginning!"** Buechner advises. *"You will get bogged down somewhere around the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus. Concentrate on the high points at first."*

Many of these high points are contained in the Lectionary; that is, the lessons selected and assigned



for each Sunday (most mainline denominations use this source). Someone has put these readings together for good reason. They are easily available on the Internet by visiting [www.lectionarypage.net](http://www.lectionarypage.net) and finding the appropriate Sunday on the calendar.

The Lectionary relies on the NSRV (New Revised Standard Version) which attempts to maintain some of the sense and beauty of the King James version while putting the ideas in more contemporary language. There are many other translations besides these two.

**Try a new translation.** Buechner also suggests trying a translation of the Bible you've never read before—"the more far out, the better!" (Eugene Peterson's "The Message" Bible, for example). This is because some segments of Scripture can be so familiar we don't even hear them anymore.

He gives the example of this verse from the NSRV: "When Jesus was crucified, the Romans nailed a sign over his head saying the 'King of the Jews'" (a label that is, clearly, meant ironically). To get something closer to the true flavor of the original situation, Buechner says to try translating the sign, "Head Jew." Wow.

**Get a good Biblical commentary.** It can make all the difference.

**You don't have to read the Bible literally.** Buechner points out that we don't take John the Baptist literally when he refers to Jesus as "the lamb of God."

**At the beginning of Lent, a group is forming at St. John's that will use visual art to see the Scriptures in a new way.** It is often helpful to discuss what you read in a group. This can be an exciting and expansive way to experience Biblical stories.

## SO WHY READ THE BIBLE?

**For its accessibility.** You no longer even need a physical Bible since you can read it online if that's your preference. Resources are extensive: You can look up a specific verse, find a story you can't quite recall, or compare translations of a certain verse. The whole Bible is at your fingertips - literally.

**For the stories.** The American monk Thomas Berry says: "The deepest crisis experienced by any society are moments of change when the stories we live by today become inadequate for the present situation."

Yet the stories of the Bible have endured for a thousand or more years, stories of love and hate, famine and war, betrayal and resurrection. Foundational stories with images that have worked their way into our literature: the serpent, the Ark, the Cross. And language that soars: the poetry, the images, the music of the Psalms.

**To be acquainted with the basic document of our faith tradition.** In the Episcopal tradition, we read Scripture in the light of the teachings of the Church over the years and our own reason and experience. We do not have to force ourselves to believe something that we can't.

**To know Jesus.** Jesus left no books and papers, no records of any kind other than the words of those faithful disciples who knew and loved him. This book is the record, the witness, the testimony – the very crux of Christianity.

When Jesus studied "the Scriptures" they were those of his Jewish faith since Jesus, like the apostles, like Paul, were all Jewish. Jesus never tells us to read the Scriptures – if he had, they would probably be Jewish ones (what we call the "Old" Testament.)

**To bring us into community.** With those who have read the stories over centuries and with the group we choose to study with in the present.

It requires some humility, to turn our attention to this ancient book, and suspend judgment in the hope that it will have something for us. It requires patience. It requires discipline, especially in the long haul. Like most things, having a spiritual life takes effort.

Buechner puts it this way: "Some will see the Bible as a holy bore and others will see it as the Word of God, which speaks out of the depths of an almost unimaginable past into the very depths of ourselves.

This is most certainly true.

## MY BIBLES: A CHRONOLOGY

**Confirmation Bible:** a black zippered King James with the words of Jesus printed in red. Brought to St. James Lutheran confirmation classes. My "confirmation verse" was John 3:16, which I found super-problematic later with its insistence that "belief" is a requirement to be "saved."

**The New Testament in Norwegian:** My grandma Ellen Trygstad, the daughter of Norwegian immigrants, was given this small volume on her Confirmation in 1898. I ended up with it.

**The Psalms in German:** My immigrant German grandpa went to Lutheran seminary in New Ulm for a semester but had to return home to work on the family farm. Inside is his name in fancy script: "Ernest Berg, 1898, Rosemount, Minnesota."

**Valentine's Day Bible:** a gigantic fake white leather picture version (King James) given me as a gift by a boyfriend (really? really?) Just looking at it was embarrassing; no way could I generate enough faith to live up to that thing!

**Study Bible:** When studying to be a deacon (twice a week classes for over two years), I had an NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) with a hard brown cover. Many passages were underlined with notes written in the margin. Well-used, although the colored plastic tabs I put at the beginning of each book give the effect of an old-timey recipe box.

**Ordination Bible:** A Jerusalem Bible (considered a poetic interpretation), a gift from Bishop Robert Anderson whom I adored.

**Bible/Prayer Book combination:** A gift from St. David's in Minnetonka, after serving five years there as a deacon. Lovely, but tiny print I could never see even with my forty-year-old eyes!

**St. John's (University) Bible:** "The Gospels and Acts." A large calligraphied book with exquisite original contemporary illustrations. (The picture on the previous page is from this Bible.) Given me by St. John's when I retired as parish deacon in 2016.

**Stolen (well, borrowed) Bible:** Grabbed from the Fireside Room when I needed a reference and couldn't find any of the above. Still residing on the shelf in my home office. Plan to return it soon.

**Online Bible:** As near as the closest internet connection. I use it constantly for research and to settle arguments in a hurry.

# JOINING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY UP IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF JESUS

*By the Rev. Craig Lemming, Associate Rector*

Last year, our Faith Formation Commission dedicated our Christian education to [The Way of Love](#): our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's curriculum of seven practices we participate in individually and communally as followers of Jesus.

That year aligned beautifully with the grounding priority of Discipleship: Practicing the Way of Jesus. This year's Sunday Faith Forums build upon that foundation of Discipleship as the Holy Spirit "builds us up in the knowledge and love of God."

In celebration of St. John's 141st year of ministry, we dedicated the month of November to revisiting St. John's history. Our beloved Director of Music Emeritus and Historian, James E. Frazier offered a three-part series in 50-year installments that guided us through his fastidiously researched tome, *For All the Saints: A History of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church*. Our intention was for our congregation to recognize ways Discipleship, Justice, Innovation, and Vitality were knit deeply into our history so that we could imagine ways to build upon that legacy entrusted to us for the next 140 years of ministry.

Studying the Holy Scriptures is both foundational to Discipleship and at the heart of our Way of Love commitment to Learn. For the four Sundays of Advent. Dr. Judy Stack and the Rev. Cynthia Bronson Sweigert led a Bible Study series that explored the Holy Scriptures appointed each week. This ancient, core practice of Christian formation nourishes and sustains our shared life of faith.

For January and February, the Faith Formation Commission chose the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers' prophetic, challenging, and timely book, *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community* for our Parish Read as well as the subject of our Sunday Faith Forums during the eight weeks of the season of Epiphany. These well-attended, rich, and challenging

discussions stretched our capacity to wrestle with uncomfortable epiphanies and encounter truths that can set us free from racist policies and practices. The Episcopal Church has consciously and unconsciously perpetuated.

Looking ahead to Lent, Jered (an avid 89.3 listener) and I (an avid 99.5 listener) are curating a Lenten "Audio Divina" Sunday Forum series. This creative way of breaking open the appointed Gospels for the Sundays in Lent through diverse selections of music – the "international language" that communicates across our many lines of difference – centers our Christian commitment to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" Holy Scripture as followers of Jesus in new ways. Don't forget, Mark 14:26 tells us that Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn after the Last Supper! But what did that sound like?

Justice is the diocesan priority behind our April 24 Sunday Forum in honor of Earth Day. Our Creation Care Team in partnership with our Youth and Faith Formation Commission center "the Fifth Gospel": God's Creation itself as we explore our Christian calling to be faithful stewards of the precious natural resources entrusted to our care for future generations.

Our Earth Day Faith Forum offers a bridge to the culmination of this liturgical year's Sunday Faith Forum offerings: a four-part Eastertide series in May on Biomimicry and New Life. Biomimicry is "a practice that learns from and mimics the strategies found in nature to solve human design challenges – and find hope." Kathy Brown, Lynn Hartmann, Don Weinkauff, and Sarah Stengle will convene conversations about the ways the migration of birds, engineering, and art invite us to embrace new life in beloved community.





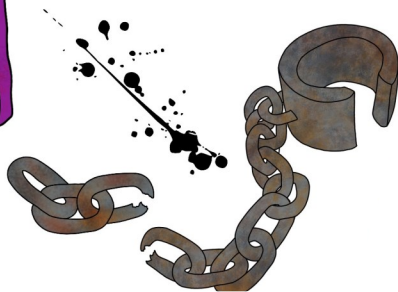
# IN DEFENSE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

By Jay Phelan, Seminarian

For many liberal Christians, Paul is considered a villain, or at least a profoundly ambiguous figure. He has been called a misogynist, a homophobe, a crank, and even an antisemite. Paul is the one, some claim, who took the simple message of Jesus and turned it into theology. I want to argue that not only are these all serious mis-readings of Paul, but they also obscure the profoundly revolutionary content of his teaching. Many modern philosophers have in recent years suggested that it was Paul who blazed the trail for a universal vision of humanity; a vision that was egalitarian, humane, and transformative. Not only this, Paul's vision was not merely "spiritual" and individualistic. Paul was concerned with much more than your "personal salvation"; he was concerned with the renewal of the entire creation. He was concerned for human bodies and the body of the earth. In this Paul was living out of his Jewish heritage and firmly grounded in the Torah and the Prophets.

Having said all this, I have a couple of caveats. Paul was a first century Jew. We risk misunderstanding him if we dress him in a business suit or skinny jeans – or for that matter in a cassock. Some years ago, a scholar wrote a book entitled *The*

*Peril of Modernizing Jesus*. It doesn't take much thought to see how that peril has worked itself out in practice – and, of course, the same peril exists for Paul. The famous scholar and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer suggested that 19th century scholars of the life of Jesus had looked down the well of history, seen their own reflections, and mistaken it for Jesus. Those



same scholars, and scholars ever since, have done the same for Paul. If Jesus and Paul are not strange to us, we have recreated them in our own image.

Some of Paul's concerns are difficult for us to grasp. His context in the Roman empire, his status as a Jew, and his experience of Messiah Jesus are all very different from our own contexts and experiences. This does not mean we cannot begin to grasp his thought – but we should be humble and careful. My second caveat is a bit more straightforward: ***Paul should not be blamed for the way he has been used throughout the centuries by his interpreters!***

Paul was a theologian of unity and wholeness with a profoundly egalitarian vision. For Paul, the death and resurrection of Christ involved each of us whether we know it or not – we are "in Christ"; we have died and risen with Christ; we are, as he puts it in Galatians, clothed with Christ. This is a universal vision: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). It is not that these binaries cease to exist – Paul is keen to make sure that his Galatian converts recognized that Jews and Gentiles may live by different rules. It is rather than these binaries are no longer necessarily sources of division and conflict. In a letter written by one of his disciples, we are told that Christ is the one who removes the "dividing wall of hostility" between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14). Paul clearly did not think of race or gender or national identity as we do today. To impose that on him is to distort him. But his words here and elsewhere become the dynamite that would eventually blow those crippling differences to bits. No one in the first century or for many subsequent centuries would think like this. Paul was unique.

The role of this community "in Christ" is spelled out further in 2 Corinthians 5. Here Paul is dealing with a squabbling community divided by wealth, status, "race," and gender. He has been frustrated with their factionalism and their arrogance and in his first letter took them to task and called them to love.

(continued next page)

In this passage he makes a striking and programmatic statement. “If anyone is in Christ [remember that phrase?] the new creation has come.” Note this: it is not as the King James put it, “he is a new creature.” No. Rather, he or she is part of the new creation. I will get back to this shortly – but Paul continues: “The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to God through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” Here once again is Paul’s universal vision. In Christ God is reconciling the entire world to Godself, “not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

You can see why the atheist, Marxist, French philosopher Alain Badiou considers Paul the founder of universalism. In Christ, all the barriers were removed. And it should be remembered that Paul was saying this at the time of the Roman empire with its rigid hierarchy, patriarchy, slavery, and violence. Paul was a revolutionary.

Paul’s gospel, as I suggested above, is not about the salvation of the individual soul which is whisked away to heaven when one dies; it is about the restoration of the entire creation and all people to the God who created both in love and hope. This is borne out in Paul’s most famous letter, his Epistle to the Romans. In Romans 8 he discusses the creation that is subject to “futility” anticipating with “groaning” the “redemption of our bodies” – note that. Our bodies not merely our souls. Paul believed in the resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul. He was not a Platonist. This is Paul’s material vision – our bodies are redeemed; the earth itself is released from futility and destruction; and all people are reconciled and renewed to the God who forgives and loves by their participation “in Christ.” And this egalitarian message of reconciliation and restoration, of love and hope, is the message entrusted to us. This is Good News indeed! We are called to tear down those walls of hostility, prejudice, fear, and division, living toward the new creation – a new creation that is for us already here.

There is much more that could be said. Consider the short letter of Philemon. Many have accused Paul of missing the chance to condemn slavery. It is important here to note the context. The Roman world and, indeed, the entire world for many

centuries, could not imagine a world without slavery. And it would have been dangerous for any Christian slave holder in the Roman world to free any enslaved person that became a Christian. That would have launched a revival among the enslaved in his household for sure! But Paul does, here as elsewhere, place (perhaps unwittingly) sticks of dynamite in the foundation of slavery by suggesting in Philemon that the runaway Onesimus is now a brother, and not just a slave. It was this understanding plus Paul’s assertion in Galatians 2 that would trouble Christian leaders for centuries and eventually undermine slavery. And perhaps Paul, within such a profoundly patriarchal society, could not yet fully grasp the implications of his own thought regarding women--although the most challenging words in the Pauline corpus regarding women were probably not written by Paul himself but by followers of Paul anxious to prove they were no threat to the empire.

Regarding his passages dealing with sexuality: first, there was no word for “homosexuality” in Greek. In fact, no English Bible used the word in translation until the mid-20th century. It is likely that what Paul had in mind was pederasty. A homosexual orientation was not on Paul’s radar (or most people’s at the time, for that matter). Would Paul have been uncomfortable with our understanding of sexual practices of all sorts today? Quite likely. But we could reasonably assert that Paul himself set for us this trajectory of liberation and that assigned to us a liberating message of hope and reconciliation for people of every orientation.

The Apostle Paul is one of the towering figures of western thought. Our democratic, egalitarian, liberationist society owes everything to him. Paul, I would argue, did not distort the message of Jesus, but expanded it, realized its implications, and directed it to Gentiles as well as Jews. And for that, I, at least, am very thankful.



## JOIN THE WORSHIP TEAM!

Help make Sunday mornings happen! Contact the addresses listed below to volunteer or learn more.

### Adult Choir & Handbell Choir:

richard.gray@stjohnsstpaul.org

**Media Team:** media@stjohnsstpaul.org

**Ushers:** jolsen4338@gmail.com

**Greeters:** getconnected@stjohnsstpaul.org

**Readers & Vergers:** rlinehan@gmail.com

**Coffee Hour:** gphagstrom@gmail.com

**Altar Guild:** powerdianep@gmail.com

## WORSHIP

**Sundays:** Rite I Eucharist at 8am in the Church; Rite II Hybrid Eucharist at 10am in the Church and on YouTube at [www.tinyurl.com/youtubeSJE](http://www.tinyurl.com/youtubeSJE).

**Compline (Night Prayer):** Thursdays at 7pm on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/stjohnsstpaul](http://www.facebook.com/stjohnsstpaul)

**Morning Prayer:** Monday-Saturday at 8am at [www.facebook.com/MorningPrayerSJE](http://www.facebook.com/MorningPrayerSJE) followed by Coffee Hour on Zoom.

**Lent Evening Prayer:** Monday-Friday at 4:30pm at [www.facebook.com/MorningPrayerSJE](http://www.facebook.com/MorningPrayerSJE) from March 3 through April 13.

## FORMATION

**Faith Forums:** Sundays at 9am in the Fireside Room and on Zoom.

**Godly Play:** For age 4-grade 5. Children gather in the Church at 10am before heading downstairs to the CYF Center together.

## GIVING

St. John's mission and ministry is more vital now than ever before. **Your financial gifts enable us to continue upgrading our livestream technology and employ and train our staff in hybrid ministry, at the same time as maintaining the essential ministries of pastoral care, outreach, and community connection for all.** Please support this effort, as you are able, by continuing to make your pledge payments or by making an offering today. To give online, [click here](#) or text 651-273-0753 with the amount you'd like to give and where you'd like the funds to go; e.g. "\$100 Pledge2022." Thank you!

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

### MARCH

- 2 Linnea Krall
- 3 Gabrielle Lawrence  
Lindsey Williams
- 4 Lyelle Palmer  
Libby Snelson  
Josephine Berry
- 6 Becky Debertin
- 7 Craig Lemming
- 8 Lindsey Olson
- 10 Emily Hogan
- 12 Richard Gross
- 13 Eli Weinkauff
- 14 William Lightner  
Charles Olsen
- 17 Sandra Roe  
Diane Power  
Stephanie Sommer
- 18 Mary Kansas
- 19 Jayan Koshy  
Helen Baxter
- 20 Rick Rinkoff  
Kevin Russ
- 21 Paula Coeey  
Christine Atchison  
Timothy Krall
- 22 Chris Steadman
- 23 Richard Rasch  
Aaron Gjerde
- 24 Janet Diehl
- 25 Linda Lindeke  
Caroline Jeffery
- 27 David Bressoud
- 30 Sarah Jeffery  
Charles Solid
- 31 Chris Johnson  
Maggie Baxter

### APRIL

- 1 Donna Genck
- 2 Christopher Howie
- 3 Zoe Matter
- 4 Johannah Frisby
- 5 Edgar Berger-  
Thompson
- 6 Barbara Ballou  
Ford Nicholson  
Evan Hansen
- 8 Milo Brown
- 9 Ruby Harkcom  
Krista Palmquist
- 10 Anne Russell  
Halle O'Falvey  
Reese Berry
- 11 Marcus Ebenhoch  
Mason Kinkead  
Fiona McInroy
- 12 Gail Lorenz
- 13 Emmett Solid
- 14 Henry Kansas
- 16 Terry Dinovo  
Michael Stack-Nelson
- 17 Bette Ashcroft  
Courtney Veszi
- 19 Jonah Spencer  
Sabine Krall  
Harrison Hennessy
- 20 Lydia Schmidt
- 21 Victoria Peterson
- 22 Suzanne McInroy
- 23 Philip Bradley
- 24 David Bendickson
- 25 Jered Weber-Johnson  
Seth Stengle
- 30 Anne Thompson

*Have your address or phone number changed?*

*Is your birthday missing or incorrect?*

*[Log on to My St. John's](#) to update your records.*





60 Kent Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102

[stjohnsstpaul.org](http://stjohnsstpaul.org)

Join us for Holy Eucharist at 8:00 & 10:00 am Sundays

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*THE EVANGELIST*

MARCH/APRIL 2022



The associate rector, music director, organist in residence, and staff singers all offer a joyful wave as they prepare for a Choral Evensong inspired by the diocesan priority of "Justice."