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## THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

### KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

December 7 and 8, 2019

PRESERVICE (*Sunday*)

*Still, Still, Still, Brass Ensemble*

BELLS AND WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

M We light two Advent candles, remembering Jesus, who came in history. He came into a world of sin and death.

C **We remember Jesus, who came as the promised Messiah. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord.**

M We hear his call to repent.

C **We light two Advent candles as a sign of our repentance and desire for renewal.**

M Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.

C **Through your Word and Spirit may our souls be blessed.**

*Two Advent candles are lit.*

OPENING HYMN 23

*Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel*

M In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

M As we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord and Savior, let us confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

All **Almighty God, merciful Father, I confess to you that I have not loved you with all my heart. In what I have done and left undone, I have pursued my ways instead of your ways. I have not loved my brothers and sisters as myself. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. I am truly sorry for my sins. I repent of them. I beg for your mercy, O Lord.**

M Forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us.

C **Cleanse me from my sins. Release me from my guilt. Grant me your Holy Spirit to amend my sinful life.**

M You came to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom.

*Cantor* *All*



Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

M You come in Word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness.

*Cantor* *All*



Christ, have mer - cy. Christ have mer - cy.


M You will come again in glory with salvation for your people.

*Cantor* *All*



Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

M The almighty God has been merciful to us and has sent his Son to die for all. For his sake, God forgives our sins and calls us from darkness to his marvelous light. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C  **Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel**  
**Shall come to you, O Israel!**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

M Heavenly Father, we are filled with wonder and awe as we contemplate your plan to save the world from sin, a plan promised in the Garden of Eden and fulfilled on the cross of Calvary.

C **For centuries your people longed to see and understand these things, yet in many ways they remained a mystery to them.**

M Thank you for making this mystery known to us and for showing us the depths to which your love would go to bring us back into your family.

C **May our celebration of Jesus' coming to us in flesh and blood revive our weary souls and inspire us to rededicate our lives to you.**

M We pray in Jesus' name. He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



C: A - men.

### FIRST LESSON

**Isaiah 11:1-10**, Bible page 690

*Jesus is the shoot that comes from the line of Jesse, King David's father. The prophet proclaims that he comes to lead us to a place of peace and rest.*

**SECOND LESSON**

**Romans 15:4-13**, Bible page 1139

*In a culture that constantly robs us of peace and joy, God gives a hope in Christ that gives endurance and encouragement in time of testing, as well as freedom to love as God loves.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY 11**

**Comfort, Comfort All My People**

**SERMON**

**Matthew 3:1-12**, Bible page 967

*Pastor Peter Panitzke*

**NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY** (*Sunday*)

**Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People**, *Brass Ensemble*

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

M The Lord be with you.



C: And al - so with you.

M Lift up your hearts



C: We lift them up to the Lord.

M Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

M Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Through his holy prophets, he promised a King to bring light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory forever and ever.

### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



C: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly is the Lord of hosts.



The whole earth is full of your glo - ry.



You are my God, and I will ex - alt you.



I will give you thanks, for you have be - come my sal -



va - tion. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly is the Lord of hosts.



The whole earth is full of your glo - ry.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M The peace of the Lord be with you always.



## O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD

C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God, you  
take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.  
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; grant us your peace. A - men.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

*Please see Communion note on page 6.*

## DISTRIBUTION HYMNS 14

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**Arise, O Christian People  
O Jesus, Lamb of God, You Are**

## CLOSING PRAYER

M Merciful Father, we give you thanks and praise that you have fed us with the precious body and blood of your dear Son for the forgiveness of our sin. By your grace fill us with the desire and the power to walk worthy of our holy calling and to reflect your glory in our daily lives; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



## BLESSING

M Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PRESIDING MINISTER** (Sunday) Pastor David Kuehl

**ORGANIST** Carol Nelson

## OUR COMMUNION PRACTICE

*The Lord's Supper is a fellowship meal. In this meal Jesus expresses his fellowship with us by giving us his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. In this meal we also express our fellowship with each other, that is, that we are united in a common confession of faith.*

*We at St. Paul's want everyone to enjoy this fellowship meal. However, we cannot ask someone to express agreement with us until we give that person an opportunity to discover what we teach. That is why we schedule frequent membership classes to provide an overview of our teachings. Following the Promise is held on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings. To register contact Pastor Nate Strobel at [nstrobel@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:nstrobel@stpaulmuskego.org).*

*If you are a member of St. Paul's or a member of a WELS or ELS congregation, we invite you to express our common confession by communing with us. You may wish to use the "Personal Preparation for Holy Communion" on page 156 of Christian Worship to examine yourself. Please register your intent to commune as a member or guest by filling out the Connection Card and placing it in the offering plate.*

*The light colored cups in the center of the individual cup tray contain non-alcoholic wine. Gluten-free wafers are located in the trays on the Communion rail. If you need a gluten-free wafer, please inform an usher as you approach the rail. The first pews in the right center section are reserved for those who have difficulty approaching the Communion rail, and we kindly ask those who desire to be communed privately to use these pews.*



Our vision is that by every possible means we bring every person in our area of influence closer to Christ through regular worship, small groups, and serving together.

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# WEEKLY CALENDAR

For the week of December 9, 2019

<b>MON</b>	10:00 am	Walking Club (Trinity Gym)
<b>TUE</b>	9:00 am	Ladies Bible Study (Faith Room)
	9:30 am	Ministerial Growth Team Meeting
	10:00 am	Walking Club (Trinity Gym)
	10:30 am	Ministerial Team Meeting
	6:00 pm	Dorcas Society Christmas Party (Grace Room)
	6:00 pm	Divorce Care (School Classroom 8)
	6:30 pm	Handbell Rehearsal (Church Balcony)
	6:30 pm	Volleyball League (Trinity Gym)
	7:00 pm	<i>Following the Promise</i> (Faith Room)
<b>WED</b>	9:30 am	Mommy & Me (Faith Room)
	9:45 am	Reading Buddies (Trinity Café)
	11:30 am	Org for Wisc Lutheran Seniors Christmas Party (Muskego Regency Center)
	3:30 pm	Advent Worship Service with Holy Communion
	4:30 pm	Public School 6-8 Grade Confirmation Instruction Classes
	7:00 pm	Advent Worship Service with Holy Communion
	8:00 pm	Brass Ensemble Rehearsal
<b>THURS</b>	6:30 am	Sunrise Bible Study (Faith Room)
	10:00 am	Walking Club (Trinity Gym)
	5:30 pm	Childcare Center Christmas Program (Main Church)
	7:00 pm	The Bridge and Contemporary Band Practice
<b>SAT</b>	8:00 am	Men's Breakfast Bible Study (Grace Room)
	9:00 am	<b>Christmas For Kids</b> (Check in at the Trinity Café)
	5:00 pm	Traditional Worship Service
<b>SUN</b>	7:45 am	Traditional Worship Service
	8:00 am	<i>Following the Promise</i> (School Classroom #8)
	9:15 am	Traditional Worship Service
	9:15 am	Grace Room Bible Study
	9:45 am	The Bridge Communion
	10:15 am	The Bridge
	10:45 am	Contemporary Worship Service

## Join Us Online

If you can't join us in person, join us online! We livestream The Bridge every Sunday at 10:15 am on the platforms below. An archive of past messages is also available on each platform; full service, full HD replays are available on our YouTube channel and websites.



[www.thebridgemuskego.org](http://www.thebridgemuskego.org)  
[www.stpaulmuskego.org](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org)



@ The Bridge at St. Paul's



@ The Bridge at St. Paul's

# ST. PAUL'S NEWS

## FLOWERS

The flowers beautifying the altar today were given in loving memory of Bonnie Banach, in memory of her December 7 birthday, by the Ray Banach and Bill Eggert families.

## FUNERALS

Sharon J. Dreyer, born November 14, 1940, was welcomed into eternal glory with her Savior on November 28, 2019. A Christian funeral was held on Saturday, December 7, 2019.

Marilyn K. Miller, born September 25, 1941, received the gift of eternal joy with her Savior on November 29, 2019. Visitation will be at Heritage Funeral Home in New Berlin on Sunday, December 8, 3:30-6:30 pm, and also at St. Paul's on Monday, December 9, 10:00-10:45 am, with the funeral following at 11:00 am.

May our God of all comfort and peace be with the loved ones of Sharon and Marilyn.

## PRAYERS REQUESTED

Please pray for the following individuals in their time of need: Carol Beyer, David Burkowitz, Steve Drobka, Carol Gosseck, Janelle Gray, Lois Guhr, Connie Hikade, Josh Nagel, Carol Smith, Jeanne Steinbrecher, and Dick and Jane Sternberg.

## HOSPITALIZED

Jon Schneck is at St. Luke's. Louise Austad, Carolyn Bourdo, Heidi Keller and baby Hadley, and Dorrette Probst have been discharged from the hospital.

## ATTENDANCE

976 were in attendance at last weekend's services; 587 at Thanksgiving services; 318 at midweek Advent

## SUNDAY MORNING NURSERY

We have a staffed nursery during the 9:15 and 10:45 am services in the east wing of the church. A silent pager system allows childcare providers to alert you of any need your child has. Our ushers are happy to assist.

## CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR RANDY FINK RETURNS CALL

Our Church Administrator Randy Fink has announced that he declined the call to serve as director of mission advancement at Manitowoc Lutheran High School and will continue to serve among us. We are so very thankful that the Holy Spirit led Randy to this decision. He has been and will continue to be an incredible blessing to our ministry! May God bless Manitowoc Lutheran as they continue the calling process.

## JOHNSON CREEK MISSION OPPORTUNITY UPDATE

On November 14, the Ministry Board and Ministerial Team were privileged to meet with the following synod and district leaders: Synod President Mark Schroeder, Western Wisconsin District President Mike Jensen, and the entire praesidium of the Southeastern Wisconsin District: President David Kolander, First Vice President Joel Leyrer, and Second Vice President Michael Woldt. These leaders shared their concerns about St. Paul's participation in a mission venture in Johnson Creek, primarily because of the need for continued healing in the Johnson Creek area following the removal of a congregation from the synod for false doctrine. The Ministry Board met the following week to discuss what they had heard. The board also recognized that there are continuing conversations among pastors and lay people in the Johnson Creek area about a mission start. The Ministry Board agreed to keep this mission opportunity in prayer. Please join us in asking the Lord of the Church to make clear to us how we might be useful in reaching the lost in the Johnson Creek area.



# SHARE CHRISTMAS JOY

## **GIFT TREE FOR OUR MUSKEGO HEALTH CARE CENTER**

Thank you for your wonderful generosity towards our Muskego community. All the resident tags from the tree have been funded. Just a friendly reminder to have your wrapped gifts to church by December 8. Be sure to register your tag! Contact Sally Wallner at (414) 218-5197 for more information.

## **TOY DRIVE FOR KIDS IN NEED**

Thanks you for your wonderful generosity for this program as well. Many children will be told the good news of Jesus and receive what might be there only gift because of you. Christmas Blessings!

## **A CHRISTMAS MEAL FOR THOSE IN NEED**

St. Paul's Food Pantry is planning to provide food boxes for Christmas on December 19. If you know of someone who would appreciate a box this Christmas, please submit the name(s) with contact information to Pastor Kuehl at (414) 422-0320, ext. 121, or [dkuehl@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:dkuehl@stpaulmuskego.org).

## **BE A LIGHT TO OUR COMMUNITY – HELP HANG CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ON CAMPUS**

This year St. Paul's will be hanging Christmas lights on a few evergreen trees along Janesville Road near the main entrances to our campus. If you or your friends would like to help in this outreach effort, please contact Outreach Coordinator Sally Wallner at 414.422.0320, ext. 294, or Worship Volunteer Coordinator Heidi Schuh at [hschuh@stpmuskego.org](mailto:hschuh@stpmuskego.org).

## **HELP KEEP LIGHTHOUSE YOUTH CENTER SHINING AT GARDEN HOMES**

The Lighthouse Youth Center on the campus of our mission partner, Garden Homes Lutheran Church, needs the following supplies for the 50-60 urban youth it serves each day. If you could assist with obtaining any of the following, contact Dr. Nelson at [jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org).

- 8 oz. cups, paper plates, napkins, paper towels, dish soap, dish scrubbers and sponges
- disinfectant cleaner, toilet cleaner, toilet brushes, dust mops, paper towels

## **REMEMBERING ST. PAUL'S HOMEBOUND**

An updated list of our homebound members and their contact information has been placed at the Welcome Center for you to remember the homebound of our congregation during the holiday season.

## **OWLS CHRISTMAS PARTY**

Celebrate Christmas at the Organization for Wisconsin Lutheran Seniors Christmas luncheon. It will be held at the Muskego Regency Center on Wednesday, December 11, at 11:30 am. Mike Westendorf will be the entertainment. His CDs will be available for purchase. Contact Charlene Pingel at (262) 490-2579 to RSVP and for more information.

## **WISCONSIN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERTS**

The Pops Concert is Sunday, December, at 3:00 pm, in the auditorium. Enjoy early Christmas merriment with bands, choirs, and instrumental ensembles. A reception of Christmas cookies, coffee, and punch will be served after the concert.

The Sacred Concert is Sunday, December 15, at 7:00 pm, in the auditorium. This concert features the A Cappella, Cantorei, and Freshman Choirs, Inspiration, Jubilation Handbell Choir, Wisconsin Lutheran Children's Choir, and numerous instrumentalists. No treats after this one.

# A COOL MILLION UPDATE

## Work When We Have the Chance

The second largest of our Cool Million projects, the reroofing of the church, is proceeding slowly. The weather has not been cooperative, but the roofers are working every day they have the opportunity.

## The Same is True in China!

Our last five \$10,000 tithe gifts from A Cool Million are going to support mission work in China. There too, we must work while we have the chance.

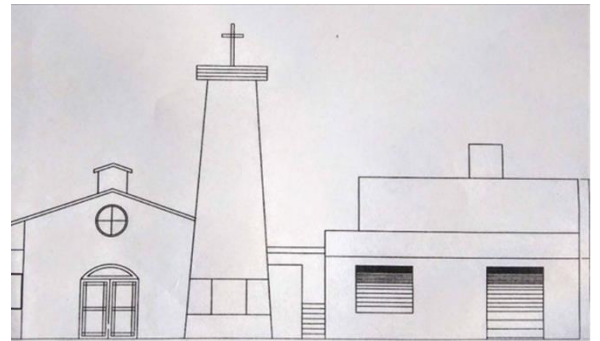
## Thank You for Every Gift

We look back in thankfulness at all that has been accomplished through A Cool Million in just over a year:

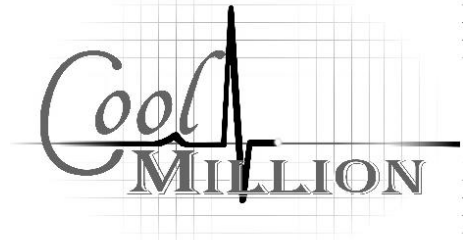
- Sanctuary lighting replacement
- Playground repaving
- New HVAC in the school building
- Centennial Gym ceiling and roof work
- Sanctuary reroofing with additional insulation

In addition, we continue St. Paul's tradition of mission-mindedness:

- We celebrate with Costa Maya Ministries because our Cool Million tithe has enabled them to begin work on their first permanent ministry center.
- We rejoice that our Cool Million tithe is supporting our African Mission team to explore new mission opportunities in Uganda and elsewhere.



Our Cool Million gifts have reached \$798,000! We are just \$2,000 away from being able to send the next \$10,000 tithe gift to support mission work in China while we have the chance.



# THE ADVENT MESSAGE

## THE CHRIST CHILD SILENCES THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

For many, “the most wonderful time of the year” isn’t so wonderful. A painful past, personal failings, and unfulfilled expectations can overshadow the joy of the Christmas season. What if this year could be different? During our December message series let’s see how Jesus can exorcize the “Ghosts of Christmas Past” so that we can truly have a merry Christmas.



## WEDNESDAY ADVENT SERVICES

3:30 and 7:00 pm

“And the glory of the LORD will be revealed.”

Each service begins with a Christmas carol hymn-sing 15 minutes prior.

**December 11**                      **God's Glory in His Priest**

**December 18**                      **God's Glory in His King**



## CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS—SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 9:00-11:45 AM

This event for ages 3-12 will feature *A Tree-rific Christmas* puppet show, *The First Christmas* movie, a special service-project craft, games led by Wisconsin Lutheran High School students, singing, and snacks. Register on the back of your Connection Card or at [www.stpaulmuskego.org](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org). In support of Christmas giving, please bring a non-perishable food item as your ticket to the event.



## LUTHERAN SCHOOL CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Friday, December 20; 5:00 and 7:00 pm

## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

The Bridge Christmas Eve Worship Service Noon

Traditional Christmas Eve Worship Services 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, and 10:00 pm

## CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE WITH HOLY COMMUNION 10:00 am

## NEW YEAR’S EVE SERVICE WITH HOLY COMMUNION

Tuesday, December 31; 5:00 pm (*Please note the time change from previous years.*)

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## FOLLOWING THE PROMISE BIBLE STUDY

Join this Bible basics class where you are sure to grow in your appreciation of what the Bible teaches. Reinforce the reason for the hope that you have and increase your ability to share it with others. This also serves as an avenue to membership at St. Paul’s, if you so choose. The study is led by Pastor Nate Strobel on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm and Sundays at 8:00 am. Contact Pastor Nate at [nstrobel@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:nstrobel@stpaulmuskego.org) or mark the back of your Connection Card to register.

## DECEMBER GRACE ROOM SERIES

Using the first two chapters of Luke, *Important Arrivals: Jesus and John* will focus on how God prepared the ancient world for the arrival of his Son. Join Mr. Mark Ricke, director of enrollment for Wisconsin Lutheran High School and a veteran high school history and religion instructor, Sundays in December in the Grace Room, 9:15-10:15 am.

# ST. PAUL'S NEWS

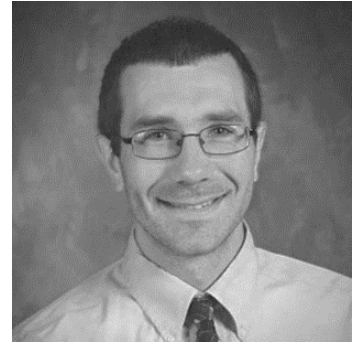
## FIFTH GRADE TEACHER CALL NEWS

With Mr. Jeff Wetzel, our current 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, taking on the new role of director of curriculum, instruction, and technology next year, the School Ministry Action Team and Ministry Board met to review the list of candidates for our next 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher on December 4, and Mr. Paul Kanzenbach was chosen.

Mr. Kanzenbach is currently serving at St. John's Lutheran School on 68<sup>th</sup> and Forest Home in Milwaukee as their 7<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom teacher, while teaching in a 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> grade departmentalized system. After graduating from Martin Luther College in 2009, he served as principal at St. Paul Lutheran School in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, until 2016 when he began serving at St. John's.

Mr. Kanzenbach has gifts in music and is near the end of his master's degree in that area of study. Because of these strong music talents, he would be asked to take on some school and church traditional worship music coordination, working together with Heidi Schuh in her current part-time role of traditional worship volunteer coordinator.

Mr. Kanzenbach and his wife are blessed with three children (ages 6, 4, and 2). Thank you for keeping him and his family in your prayers as he considers this call to serve our students and families.



## ST. PAUL'S TEEN BASKETBALL LEAGUE TO START

Very soon, St. Paul's will be pulling together its team to play in the WELS High School Boys Basketball League (i.e., Sunday Church Ball). The league season begins in late December/early January and runs through the beginning of March. If you are a member of St. Paul's and not playing on your high school's basketball team, contact Dr. Nelson at [jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org) to get your name on the list and receive information as it becomes available.

## CHURCH LIBRARY CHRISTMAS MATERIALS

Did you know our church library, located next to the Grace Room, has over 90 Christmas books and DVDs for children and adults on display? Check them out!

## MINISTRY ADMINISTRATOR STAFF OPENING

There is an immediate opening for the ministry administrator position at the Point of Grace Milwaukee Campus Ministry. This part-time role oversees and coordinates campus ministry for Milwaukee college campuses. They are looking for a person who is passionate about serving college-aged students, self-driven, and organized. For further information, including a detailed job description, please contact Pastor Aaron Strong at [astrong@gracedowntown.org](mailto:astrong@gracedowntown.org).

## CHURCH NURSERY STAFF OPENING

One of our current church nursery staff members is moving out of the area and will no longer be able to fill the position. This is a paid position with hours of every other Sunday, 9:00 am -12:00 pm. Contact Community Outreach Coordinator Sally Wallner at [swallner@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:swallner@stpaulmuskego.org) or (414) 218-5197 to apply.

## ST. PAUL'S CLEAN TEAM STAFF OPENING

A position on our clean team is becoming open in January. This is a paid position with 4-8 hours on weeknights and some occasional fill-in hours on weekends. Responsibilities include cleaning of school, church, and fill-in at the child care facilities to create an optimal environment for student learning and worship. Contact Staff Minister Randy Fink, church administrator, at [rfink@stpmuskego.org](mailto:rfink@stpmuskego.org) or (414) 422-0320, ext. 120, to apply.

# THE PERFECT TIME TO INVITE

During the Christmas season, most of us are scrambling to buy and wrap last-minute gifts. We're up to our ears in cookies, we've got stockings to stuff, and parties to attend. But what if the most important thing that happens this Christmas isn't something we do, but a question we ask? "Would you like to join us at church this Christmas?"

## Three Reasons Christmas Is the Perfect Time to Invite Someone to Church

### 1. The Christmas spirit already has people doing things they wouldn't normally do.

Only at Christmas do we see penny-pinchers digging in their pockets for change to give to the man merrily ringing the bell outside the store. For the sake of Christmas, even our most dysfunctional family members will gather around the table. And even if we aren't sure we like eggnog, we'll give it a try because, well, it's Christmas.

Research shows most people would come to church if someone they knew just asked, and people are more receptive to going to church at Christmas than other times of year, according to LifeWay Research. Blame it on the infectious amounts of holiday cheer, but more than any other time of year people are willing to try something new, making it one of the best opportunities to invite someone to church.

### 2. By nature, people are curious.

Around the world, people will flock to churches on Christmas leaving others to wonder, "What's all the hype about?" Never underestimate the amount of desire a little curiosity can spark. Luke 2:15-16 says that when the shepherds heard about Jesus' birth they said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened...' so they hurried off and found Mary, Joseph and the baby who was lying in a manger."

Curiosity is what led the shepherds to meet Jesus, and curiosity could be what leads the people you invite to meet Jesus as well.

### 3. Many are in desperate need of good news and great joy.

Every day people are faced with staggering circumstances, and Christmastime is no exception. Marriages end, loved ones pass away, and devastating test results come back. For many, the future seems bleak and hearts are broken.

Often, people who are hurting feel like church isn't for them. Yet on the first Christmas, those who were frightened and in desperate need of good news and great joy were addressed directly.

In Luke 2:10-11 the angel responded, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born..."

This Christmas, we have the opportunity to introduce those who are hurting to the same Savior. We can invite people to a place where they can meet the God who acknowledges their greatest fears, sees their deepest longings and sent His Son to save us.

Whether someone comes to church out of curiosity, a willingness to try something new, or desperation for a Savior, it could be your invitation that leads someone to meet Jesus! At the very least, you'll provide that person with a much-needed break from all the small talk and Christmas movies.

The hope we give away at Christmas is sure to outlast the cookies and the lights on the tree.

**Pick up a few of our post-card invitations in the lobby to use as a method to invite! Our website address and all service times are listed on the post card.**

# YEAR END GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

## WISH LIST

This list of items (explanations below) would greatly benefit the ministry at St. Paul's. These items are above and beyond the budgeted expenses. If you would like to give toward a Wish List item, clearly mark your envelope, "Wish List," with the item title, or give online at [www.stpaulmuskego.org/give](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org/give).

Item	Est. Cost	Received	Still Needed
Promethean Board	\$4,500	\$3,775	\$725
Photo Feature Walls	\$4,000	\$100	\$3,900
Church Signage Updates	\$6,373	\$0	\$6,373
Family Room Update	\$8,850	\$1,000	\$7,850

### Promethean Board

Promethean boards are touch screen tv monitors with better screen resolution than a smartboard and less maintenance cost. This Wish List item will fund the last of the three Promethean Boards installed this summer.

### Photo Feature Walls

Four photo feature walls will be installed in the church lobby and Trinity Café to visually communicate our core values to members and guests and to celebrate the gospel ministry God does among us.

### Church Signage Updates

For a first-time guest, navigating our church building can be challenging. The updates to the church signage through this Wish List item will include new exterior front door lettering and a total sign update

### Family Room Update

Our Family Room is used extensively by our guests, not only by parents with small children but also baptismal families, brides, and disabled persons. Our pastors often use it as a place to meet with members and guests as well. The room has had the same furniture for over 20 years. The furnishings below will update the room and result in furniture that is also easy to clean.

\$2,600 – Leather loveseat with accent pillows

\$2,600 – Leather loveseat and accent pillows

\$1,250 – Leather recliner

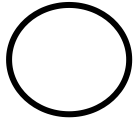
\$1,250 – Leather recliner

\$1,150 – Mirror and two end-tables

## Giving Reminders...

- The safest and most cost-effective way for St. Paul's to receive your weekly or monthly gift is through a recurring online donation. Nearly 30% of our gifts are received in this way. Set up your online giving at [www.stpaulmuskego.org/give](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org/give).
- If you are 70 ½ or older, giving a gift from your IRA could reduce your tax payment.
- Giving a gift of appreciated stock can also provide tax advantages.
- Our Gift Trust Fund and Legacy Funds have been established to receive estate gifts.

For help with any of the above, contact our Church Administrator Randy Fink at [rfink@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:rfink@stpaulmuskego.org) or (414) 422-0320, ext. 120.



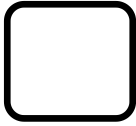
## GroupWork

Bible Study Discussion Starters

*Life application materials for use in Connector Groups, home devotions, and other small groups.*

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1. What stresses you out the most as you prepare for Christmas?
2. The kingdom of God (Matthew usually uses the term “kingdom of heaven”) is present where God reigns as king. Read Psalm 72 where King Solomon describes the reign of Messiah King. What phrases from this psalm comfort you?
3. Read Matthew 3:1-12. The way into God’s kingdom is to repent. How would you explain “repent” to a six year old? Do you recall the picture pastor used in his message?
4. Read of the flesh/Spirit contrast in Galatians 5:19-23. Where do you see more of the flesh and less of the Spirit in your life because of your Christmas busyness?
5. Read Luke 3:1-18. Luke’s account includes examples of “fruit of repentance.” Looking back at your answers to question 5, what might be a fruit of repentance that you will produce through the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.
6. Close with the reading of Acts 2:38-39. In the closing prayer, claim for yourselves that promise of forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit in your baptism.



# NoteSheet

Sermon Outline

Take notes during the sermon to help you remember the main points

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## The Ghosts of Christmas Past

### Haunted Because I Can't Ever Be "Enough"

Matthew 3:1-12, Bible page 967

#### 1. The Kingdom of Heaven is "Enough"

"Everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4).

#### 2. The key to the Kingdom of Heaven is admitting you are not enough.

"You brood of vipers." "We have Abraham as our father!"

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

#### 3. The Kingdom of Heaven is present where the Spirit is active.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

### My Next Steps to Christmas Joy

- **See the Kingdom of Heaven:** Join us in reading Luke during December and see the King reveal himself in word and deed. Put your email address on the Connection Card and receive the daily reading every morning.
- **Admit the emptiness within:** We long for the coming of the King and his kingdom when we see the need for him. Read again the flesh/Spirit contrast in Galatians 5:19-23. Where do you see more of the flesh and less of the Spirit in your life because of your Christmas busyness?
- **Look for the emptiness in others:** Christmas can be a difficult time for many people. Whom can you invite into the Kingdom with you this Christmas season by spending time with them, or by including them in your celebrations, or by inviting them to the Christmas services?