



# St. Paul's EPISTLE

December 2020 edition

## PERSONAL OUTREACH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

by Pastor Peter Plagenz



When you think of outreach, what comes to mind? Is it a week of VBS filled with special activities or a Splash Party with tons of food and games? If so, you wouldn't be wrong. These certainly are outreach, but to stop there misses the vast opportunity. Every one of us already has a personal mission field right in front of us—individuals in our circles who aren't connected to their Savior, whether they are family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers. We have an opportunity to share the life-altering gospel with them.

Perhaps sharing that message is intimidating to you. If so, you're not alone. "What would I say?" "What if I say something wrong?" "What if they ask a question I don't know the answer to?" These types of thoughts and questions are real and in some situations can even give an experienced evangelist butterflies in their stomach. However, while valid, these emotions do not give an exception from reaching out to the lost. We are called to "preach the word... whether it is convenient or not" (2 Timothy 4:2). But how can we do that if we are too nervous or afraid of an undesired outcome?

**That's why in some cases a simple invitation is the best way to do personal outreach.** If you're worried about what to say or saying something wrong, keep it simple. Just invite them to church. If you're worried about what questions they might ask, skip the in-depth religious discussion. Just invite them to church. It's through God's Word proclaimed in our worship services that the Holy Spirit will work. If they come, be sure to make them feel welcome by introducing them to others or guiding them through the service if they are unfamiliar with our worship.

And one more thing to make giving that invitation even easier is having a unique occasion to bring it up, a special service to which you can invite them. We have those coming up this holiday season. There are several special services you can use to initiate that invitation conversation. Check out the calendar for dates and times of these services. Even if that worship is from home, you can still invite them to tune in to our services. Share the streaming link ([stpaulswr.org/watch](http://stpaulswr.org/watch)) or the local broadcast information (Cable TV: Solarus HD Channel 3 or Charter Channel 985 ) with them, so they can worship with us virtually and still hear that powerful Word of God.

Don't let nerves or fears prevent you from reaching out. Keep it simple and invite your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers to the upcoming, special worship services! †

Reaching out with  
the love of Jesus.

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Worship  
Sunday at 8:00 & 10:30AM  
Monday at 11:00AM

[www.stpaulswr.org](http://www.stpaulswr.org)

## ADJUSTMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

by Pastor Lucas Proeber

It's hard to believe that Christmas Eve is close to a month away, depending on when you are reading this. This year has been filled with all sorts of adjustments, which could be something to be anxious about, especially if you're someone who doesn't like change. However, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I want to remind myself and you that, while this world will always be filled with change, we have an unchanging God. More than that, we have continued opportunity to worship that God and remind ourselves of the unchanging message of his Word—that he has said and done everything necessary to save us from sin, death, and the devil. This message is especially evident as we enter into the “festival” half of the church year, which walks us through the events of Jesus' life (starting from his birth and ending with his ascension into heaven). That cycle and those reminders will not change.

However, due to the continued reality of the pandemic, there are two updates that the Leadership Council and pastoral staff would like you to be aware of:



First, on Christmas Eve, it has been decided that we will have two services, at 4:00 and 6:30, much like the midweek Advent services. Each service will be an exact copy of the other, using the same lessons and familiar carols to remind us of God's perfect plan of salvation. The reasoning behind this decision is that, given the typical increase in attendance on Christmas Eve, this will allow us to practice social distancing more effectively and also give those in our neighborhood and church family ample opportunity to travel to Bethlehem with us to see the Christchild lying in the manger. I'll encourage you to take to heart Pastor Plagenz's article in this letter, which highlights extending invitations to others to join us in worship that day.

Second, we discussed whether or not to bring back the 6:30 Monday night service at the beginning of 2021.

However, given the current trend of the pandemic, the decision was made to hold off on that for now. The decision will be revisited in spring of 2021. We will continue to offer the 11:00 Monday At-Risk service throughout that time.

Third, we also encourage you to continue to follow national, state, and local decrees with regard to face coverings, social distancing, and the like. We want as many people as possible to be able to join with us for Christmas Eve and other such services; wearing a mask (when you are able) makes it easier for many in our church family to feel safe joining in worship.

If I've learned anything over this past year, it's that a lot of things change. But our God is not one of those things. Even (and, perhaps, especially) when things seem like they're always changing, take comfort in knowing that his message of salvation, peace, and joy in the Savior is something you can always lean on. Take advantage of the time you get to hear about your Savior, so that you can always be reminded of how sure and certain his promises really are. We'll see you on Christmas Eve to rejoice at Jesus' birth. †



## DECORATE A JESSE TREE THIS ADVENT

Like an Advent calendar, this activity can help your family count down the days until Christmas. Each day, hang a different Jesse Tree ornament on a Christmas tree, branch, garland, mantel, or wherever. The name Jesse tree comes from Isaiah 11:1, which says, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.” Jesus is that Branch, and each Jesse tree ornament symbolizes part of Jesus' genealogy. You can download ornaments and sign up for daily devotions at [mlc-wels.edu/publications/seasonal-devotions](http://mlc-wels.edu/publications/seasonal-devotions). A devotional booklet can also be picked up in the Welcome Center. We hope you find this a meaningful way to prepare for the coming of Christmas. †

## NEW TILE AT LITTLE LAMBS

by Mrs. Carole Melso, ECM Director

Little Lambs would like to give a big THANK YOU to the St. Paul's Willing Workers group. They have graciously donated the money to allow us to tile portions of two of our child care classrooms. This has made our clean-up routines so much easier, and the rooms look fantastic! We also want to acknowledge the labor put in by Ron Schroeder and Larry Wesenberg as they spent countless hours ripping up carpet and old glue before they could even begin the tiling process. You are a blessing to all of us! †



## END TIMES BIBLE CLASS

The topic of End Times is prevalent in many churches, Lutheran or otherwise. That's because it's important! The Bible speaks clearly about being prepared for Jesus' return and what that return means for us. But it can also be confusing because there are so many interpretations out there with regard to things like the events leading up to Judgment Day.

So, realizing the importance of this topic, we're offering an eight-lesson discussion on the End Times. You can join us on Sundays at 9:15 AM in person or via Google Meet. If you miss a lesson or two, you can still join at any point! We also want to encourage you to invite others to join in learning more about the End Times, so that they might understand the importance of this topic and know what to expect as the End draws closer. †

## ATTENTION PARENTS!

by Kent Schroeder, Chairman - Family Ministry

Due to continuing challenges related to classroom gathering, our church is continuing to offer a virtual Sunday school. Beginning Sunday, December 13, the "Winter" 13 lesson session will start. We are registering all children of the congregation to receive the lesson worksheets through the mail at no cost to the families. The video part is available at [nph.net/ss-at-home](http://nph.net/ss-at-home). These engaging and age-appropriate, video-based lessons are free with no required password for access. If you have trouble viewing this video please contact the church office, and we will provide assistance.

If you know of someone that could benefit from this program, please contact Kent Schroeder to sign them up (715-421-4202 [knks@wctc.net](mailto:knks@wctc.net)).

Lesson videos will include a brief introduction for parents along with the lesson's aim, the truth that is being shared, and a relevant application for the child, followed by the Bible lesson for the week. Following the Lesson Video, we encourage you to complete an activity related to the lesson with the child to reinforce the Memory Treasure.

Lessons taught by experienced WELS teachers are available free via YouTube. The engaging and age appropriate Lesson Videos will tie to printed Student Lessons that our church provides to at no cost. This approach presents an easy yet meaningful way for you to encourage a child's faith in Christ.

May God bless your child as we together continue to share His love. †

### END TIMES CLASS SCHEDULE

We will use this schedule as our guideline, noting that changes may occur:

Nov 22 – God's Word on the Future:  
Jesus Is Coming!

Nov 29 – The Unknown Day  
and Hour of Jesus' Return

Dec 6 – While We Wait for Jesus' Return

Dec 13 – The Events of Judgment Day

Dec 20 – The Judgment

\* Break for Christmas and New Year's \*

Jan 3 – Millennialism

Jan 10 – Dispensationalism

Jan 17 – The Present Life  
in Light of Jesus' Future Coming

# RANDOM RAMBLINGS AND THANKFUL THOUGHTS

by Staff Minister Randy Pahl

As I sat down to share the latest in this edition of our epistle, the weather forecast for the next several days predicted that we would experience temperatures in the mid to upper 60s and maybe even 70-degrees! I couldn't help but think, "What strange weather in an even stranger year! That's it - I think I've got my topic for this month's musings. As uniquely as most things have turned out this year, why not format this edition just a bit differently!" And, so, with that said, here we go...

1) A moving tribute to our veterans – On Veterans' Day, November 11, Mr. Melso led our school's chapel service under the theme of "JOY" = an acronym that reminds us to put Jesus first in our lives, then Others, and finally Yourself. He shared a story about a real war hero who gave his life so that others might live, as well as a video about the men and women who have so faithfully served our country in the past and still do today! Finally, he

reminded us that our Savior paid the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of ALL people! – "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [ Matthew 20:28 ]

2) SPYs – From somewhat round pumpkins to round bowling balls. Confused? Don't worry, we're here to help. On Saturday, October 24th,



our St. Paul's Youth "carved out" a little time in their schedules to study God's Word and to turn several pumpkins into masterpieces. Those jack-o'-lanterns that were left behind were proudly displayed at Mr. Pahl's house for

a few weeks! We also hope to roll into Bowlmor Lanes later in November for what should be a striking good time. Just another opportunity for our SPYs to let their lights shine! What wonderful Christian young men and women with which we are blessed in our congregation! – "Let no one look down on your youth.

Instead, be an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." [ I Timothy 4:12 ]

3) Caught in the middle of Reformation, Thanksgiving, and Christmas – I had the awesome privilege of being able to present chapel to our students and visitors on November 4. We briefly looked back at how Martin Luther persevered in his faithfulness to God during his lifetime. Also, I was able to help lead our worship services on Sunday, November 15, as we gave thanks "for all the saints who from their labors rest." (CW 551) And, good Lord willing, I am looking forward to delivering the Advent Worship Service on December 16 as we recall the Lord's first coming and eagerly anticipate His second return. Put it all together and I can't help but be reminded of that beautiful song that was sung by the late Rich Mullins, "Our God is an Awesome God"!

Now, may this Awesome God whom we serve continue to be with us and bless us for the sake of His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus! To Him be all glory and honor and praise!!! †



AJ received a thank you letter for a card he made for a veteran.



1st and 2nd grade making "landforms."

# The **CRISIS** of **DISRESPECT**

[The following article first appeared in the Autumn 2017 edition of Parent Crosslink magazine, a WELS periodical for day school and Sunday school parents. Though the intended audience is parents, the article has an excellent and timely message for people of all ages.]

Has disrespect for authority reached a crisis level? If so, is the attitude in your household part of the solution or part of the problem?

Teachers in some school districts express fear for their own safety because of student threats and student violence. Umpires and referees at grade school and youth athletic events have been accosted by irate fans, including parents. Too often children openly show disrespect to their parents in public places.

Such behavior is shocking and disappointing, but it is not surprising. Every Christian child also has a sinful nature. That sinful nature doesn't like to be under authority or to be in submission.

Children are also affected by our society. Respect for authority is undermined by instances of misconduct and immorality in the highest offices in our land. Reports of misuse of authority by a few policemen cast shadows of suspicion on the majority who are upright and honest. Comedians publicly ridicule elected officials. TV sitcoms portray

parents as buffoons and glamorize the characters of impudent children. American insistence on the rights of the individual sometimes degenerates into an attitude that rejects any authority. To some, freedom means that no one can tell them what to do or that they don't have to answer to anyone but themselves.

Of course, Christians don't look to themselves for direction. Godly parents and children alike have a much wiser source for guidance—a divine source. By the power of God's Spirit, we are moved to search for answers to this crisis of disrespect in the wellspring of all authority.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

God commands children to be obedient and to respect their parents. Obedience and respect for parents are so important that God attaches a promise to his command: "Honor your father and mother . . . so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2,3). God expects us to show that same obedi-

ence and respect to all whom he has placed over us.

Paul writes, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted...Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:1,2,7).

## HOW DO WE TEACH CHILDREN TO RESPECT AUTHORITY?

We teach children to respect authority by teaching children what God commands and by explaining God's purpose in establishing authority. God has established authority in order to bless us. He has given parents to children to provide for their physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare. He has established government to provide law and order, peace and safety. Civilization cannot long survive when anarchy and lawlessness reign. By showing

respect to those in authority, we thank and honor our God, who has established all authority.

Respect for authority outside the home begins with respect for parents in the home. Parents will not hold the respect of young people for long if they try to be one of them. Children do not need parents who are their buddies. They need parents who are eager to train their children not only to know God and all that he has done to win salvation for them in Christ Jesus but who also will teach their children to apply their gifts and energies in obediently pursuing God's will in their lives. In other words, children need direction and discipline.

Fair and consistent discipline produces respect. Unreasonable demands and harsh treatment produce resentment. The Bible warns, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Christian discipline involves more than pointing out sin and administering appropriate punishment. It involves assuring children of God's forgiveness. It means telling them that Jesus died for all their sins.

We earn the respect of our children by acting with integrity. When we are wrong, we ought to admit it. Apologizing when we are wrong encourages respect. Refusing to admit when we are wrong undermines it.

Showing respect is often a matter of demonstrating common courtesy. Children can hold doors for the elderly. They can rise when someone in authority comes into the room. They can offer a chair to an adult and address people by their titles, rather than their first names. Children can be taught to say please

and thank you. They can learn that their tone of voice can convey either respect or disrespect.

Parents teach respect by example. The way we treat our spouses and support their role as father or mother will either create an atmosphere of respect for parental authority or undermine it. When one spouse ridicules or disrespects the other, children lose respect for both parents. When adults act like children at athletic contests and become verbally abusive with officials, they send the wrong messages to their children. Children will reflect their parents' attitudes toward their employers, the police, elected officials, pastors, and teachers. We teach respect by speaking well of those in authority and taking their words and actions in the kindest possible way.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO ABUSE THEIR AUTHORITY?**

The Bible's advice is completely contrary to the way we think by nature. Peter writes, "Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God" (1 Peter 2:18,19). God will hold those in authority accountable for their actions. He holds us accountable for our attitudes and actions toward those he places over us.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHOSE POLICIES ARE CONTRARY TO WHAT WE BELIEVE?**

We can disagree without being disrespectful. We can point out the errors in thinking and in policies without undermining the public of-

fice an individual holds. We can teach our children that those in authority can make mistakes and can be wrong without giving the children the impression that they can disobey officials with whom they disagree.

#### **WHAT ABOUT PUBLIC OFFICIALS WHOSE MORAL CONDUCT IS WRONG AND SHAMEFUL?**

The respect we owe governmental officials and all who are in authority over us has to do with the office, not necessarily with the person. The men who were ruling the Roman world when Peter and Paul wrote were not very moral individuals.

Some indulged in sexual orgies and drunkenness. Others were unbelievably cruel and inhumane. Yet Paul wrote, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1). He directed Titus, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good" (Titus 3:1). Peter wrote, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority" (1 Peter 2:13). We respect the office because God instituted it, and we respect the individual because of the office he or she holds.

The only time we have the right to disobey those whom God has placed over us is when they command us to do what is wrong or forbid us to do what God has commanded. Then with Peter and the other apostles we will reply, "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29). †

*By John Brenner is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin.*

## IN THE MAILBOX

Dear St. Paul's family,

I would like to thank you for the support I was shown during my cancer diagnosis and treatments. The cards, notes, calls, food, words of encouragement and mostly prayers were so appreciated. Above all else, I thank the Lord for walking with me.

Your sister in Christ,  
Linda Pollnow

**To Giveaway**—One CapTel 840i telephone. This phone allows the user to both listen to and read phone conversations. To operate, the person will need internet access. Fred Camacho purchased this phone for his mother, who no longer can use it. In the time she was using it, she was almost totally deaf, and it provided an excellent means of communication. She enjoyed being able to interact with family members who could not be with her. The phone is in the office workroom, if you would like to look at it.

## SPECIAL GIFTS AND MEMORIALS

*Through November 15, 2020*

### Current Expenses

- In memory of Scott Kawalski given by Randy & Pat DeBoer
- In memory of Donna Stensberg given by Huntz & Marilyn Link

### Cheerful Givers

- In memory of Mike Walton given by Kathy Jackson
- In memory of Janet Heister's son-in-law given by Anita Simenson

### Mortgage

- In memory of Donna Stensberg given by Lavern & Delores Becker

### Endowment Fund

- In memory of Donna Stensberg given by Mike & Judy Anderson

Baptisms:  
Annalise Marie Meister  
Haley Crawford  
Emma Arlene Dennee

With the Lord:  
Donna Stensberg

## CATECHISM CORNER

**Why do believers label the first person of the Triune God "the Father"?**

**Malachi 2:10** Don't we all have one *Father*? Hasn't one God created us? Why then do we violate our vows to each other, polluting the covenant of our fathers?



**Matthew 3:17** ...and a voice out of the heavens said, "This is *my Son*, whom I love. I am well pleased with him."

**John 20:17** Jesus told her, "Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to *my Father*. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to *my Father and your Father*—to my God and your God.'"

**Galatians 4:4,5** But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law.

**Galatians 3:26** In fact, *you are all sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Luther's Catechism © 2017 NPH



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December 2020 edition



**SONGS FOR THE SAVIOR**  
**Midweek Advent Services**  
**Wednesday, December 2, 9 & 16**  
**4:00 & 6:30 PM**

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