From the Pastor…

**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- January 2020

699 Stambaugh Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146

Phone: 724.347.3620 Little People Pre-School: 724.347.3620 (option 4)

E-mail: church@saintspeterandpaul.net [www.saintspeterandpaul.net](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)

“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

Holy Innocence

For the last 1500 years, the Church has set aside December 28th as a feast day to remember the Holy Innocents who gave their lives for the sake of Christ. Who are the Holy Innocents? In Matthew 2, beginning with the 16th verse, we read the account of Herod’s actions after learning that the wise men had deceived him (they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod after worshiping the Christ child). Herod, being filled with a wrathful fury, slew every male child 2 years and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. The streets echoed the cries of mothers who wept loudly in lamentation, as was prophesied by Jeremiah.

 These children all died for Christ’s sake and they were hallowed by the early Church as the first martyrs for the Gospel. While Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt for refuge, Herod covered all threats against his reign. Extremely paranoid, he even had his three sons murdered. All these children who had dwelt in the land of Bethlehem had committed no crime, nor had they been found to be harboring the Christ. Still there was a chance that one of them could actually be the Christ child. Since Herod only knew the time during which the wise men had come, he thought it preferable that mothers and fathers should be heartbroken in order to spare an entire country confusion and uproar over the one born King of the Jews. Could such a little child cause the entire kingdom to collapse? In Herod’s mind, there was no doubt. It was, after all, not only Herod who was troubled at the wise men’s arrival in Jerusalem, but

“all of Jerusalem was troubled with him”.

 So on December 28th, the Church is called to gather in solemn remembrance around the feast of the Lord. Often the Gloria and the Alleluias are eliminated from the worship service so as to remember the mourning of the grief stricken mothers in Bethlehem and the surrounding country.  So, what is it that the Church can learn from the deaths of these children and from the fleeing of the Lord our Christ? And what can she learn from the grieving hearts of the mothers and fathers? It is as Luther spoke:

“But here we also see that, although God permits his church to be afflicted, yet we must confess that he truly and faithfully stands by her. Thus God has arranged it through the wise men, that they should provide the necessary means for the Child’s support in his flight into Egypt. (see verse 11.) That was doubtless no mean present. Thus God will constantly stand by his word and his church. Though tyrants may rage, they must still let his Church and the Word remain; yea more, their rage and persecution shall be the means of increasing the Church and spreading the word of God still farther. There is no doubt of this. Doubtless Mary and Joseph spoke to others of the great wonder connected with this Child, and brought them to faith and salvation.”

 Now, the witnesses of those who suffered and died for the sake of the Gospel live on. And we, the Church, are emboldened to go out wherever we are driven, whether by our vocations or by persecution, to share the good news of the child, born lowly and in a manager, to seek and to save the lost by His death on a cross. We do not fear for Christ is always near. Therefore, we will stand and take courage in the word of comfort that one day our grief and sorrows shall be replaced with endless gladness and joy. Those who have died for the sake of Christ have not lost their lives, but have gained it in Him. Remember, this January, to pray for those who suffer great persecution for the sake of Christ. Pray for their strength and comfort. Pray for the Church here in America, that we may have the courage to stand firm upon the rock of Christ, as did the faithful witnesses of old.

God’s blessings.

~Pastor Jacob Deal

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**LIKE & FOLLOW both our Church and Preschool Facebook pages.**

Remember to like, comment, and share to help us reach as many people as possible.

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**“Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”**

**is January 12th!**

***Let us remember those in need!***

Please consider making a financial donation to this important function of our church. As we shift into the midst of winter, there is often an increase in demand on our Food Pantry.

 Let’s try to bring some joy into the lives of others and help them feel God’s blessings and love.

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

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**Scrip/Gift Card Program**

The next due date for orders and payments for the Scrip/Gift Card program is Sunday, January 5th. Orders and payments are to be given directly to Matt Berent.

**Thank You for Serving in January:**

**Assisting Elders:** Barry Nelson & Hugh Owen. **Ushers:**  Ralph Dorman, Jonathan Baisch, Matt Berent, Gary Burns, & Bob Sulek (alternate). **Altarware:** Clara Krivosh & Cheryl Fedele.

**January Greeters:**

 5 ~ Barry & Chris Nelson

12 ~ Dolores Fee & Diane Riefstahl

19 ~ Ralph Dorman & Diane Riefstahl

26 ~ Jeff & Stacy Brandes

***New Greeters are ALWAYS needed!***

 ***If you would like to be added to the Greeters’ schedule, please speak with Diane. Thank you!***

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**CELEBRATING IN JANUARY!**

**Birthdays:**

Mike Flaugher 1 - 4

Gerald Arthur 1- 12

Kenzie Critzer 1- 20

Rachal Myers 1- 22

John Zachar 1- 27

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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**Church Committees and Organizations:** A friendly reminder that reports for the **2019 Annual Report** are due to Diane Sunday, January 5th. You should have found copies of your 2018 reports in your church mailboxes in early December. If possible, email your reports to church@saintspeterandpaul.net.

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**Join us Sunday, January 12th**

 **following worship for**

**Coffee & Donuts Fellowship!**

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Those wishing to send **Virginia Lehman** “get well” wishes may mail them to her at 92 Wet Track Road, West Middlesex, PA 16159.

**Thrivent Financial –**

**Choice Dollars Program:**

Sincere thanks to the following who directed Thrivent Financial Choice Dollars to our church recently: Marie Flaugher and David Williams.

 If you are enrolled in the Thrivent Choice Dollars program, please make certain to re-designate if you wish to continue to make Sts. Peter & Paul’s the recipient of your Choice Dollars even if you have previously done so. Renewals are no longer automatic.

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**Our Home Bound Members:**

***Please keep the following people in your prayers:***

Helen Bender

920 Pleasantview Dr.

New Castle, PA 16101

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Mary Chmielewski

87 S. Neshannock Rd.

Hermitage, PA 16148

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Dan Davis, Avalon Springs

745 Greenville Road

Mercer, PA 16137

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Edna Krajci, **Vista Center at The Ridge**
3379 Main St
Mineral Ridge, Ohio 44440
330-652-9901

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Mary Ann Krajci, John XXIII

2250 Shenango Valley Freeway

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-981-3200

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Marion Roberts

The Lakes at Jefferson, Room 221

7271 W. Market St.

Mercer, PA 16137

717-798-5330

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Barbara Vasconi

880 Mayfield Rd.

Sharpsville, PA 16150

724-962-7960

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Our church will be hosting the **SELC District Circuit Conference** Feb. 4-5, 2020. Stay tuned to see how you can help at this event!

**It’s that time of the year again!**

**Please remember to keep doors to the Sanctuary and stairwells closed when not in use to conserve heat and help save on heating costs. ~Thank you!**

The 2020 Altar Flower sign-up sheet has been posted in the narthex. Sponsorship costs $30. Payments may be placed in a pew envelope labeled with your name and wording for the dedication.

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**Congratulations to the newly-elected church officers for 2020:**

Jeff Brandes - President

Jonathan Baisch - Vice President

Matt Berent - Recording Secretary

Dolores Fee - Financial Secretary

Rebekah Baisch - Treasurer

Jesse Riffle - Trustee

Bob Sulek - Trustee

Hugh Owen - Trustee

Hank Holcroft - Trustee

Cheryl Fedele - Trustee

Anson Holcroft - Trustee

Katie Laird - Auditor

Jerome Thomas - Auditor

Jesse Riffle - Auditor

Ana Deal - Auditor

Bev Chlpka - Auditor

Ruth Meszaros - Financial Staff

Joan Rice - Financial Staff

Diane Riefstahl - Preschool Board

Marie Flaugher - Preschool Board

Installation of officers will take place during worship Sunday, January 5th.

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Help will be needed to **“un-decorate”** the church Saturday, January 11th at 10 am. Please consider lending a hand!

**Be certain to check out our website:** [**www.saintspeterandpaul.net**](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)**.**

Current service bulletins and newsletters may be accessed under the Publications page and there is an audio link to Pastor Deal’s sermons.

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Volunteer tutors are needed for the **Adult Literacy Center at Butler County Community College**. Check out the information posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway for further information.

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Have you ever wondered about the origin of the beautiful words which make up our liturgy? What about the basis of our hymns found in our worship hymnal? The source is the same for both: The Holy Bible.

 It is to The Bible we should turn, not only to find words of comfort, but for God’s plan as to how our lives should be led. Arm yourselves with these words, and you will see God’s plan for you!

 The following are the Bible verses from the month of **December:**

**FOR CHILDREN:**

**Dec. 1:***Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he.  Zech. 9:9*

**Dec. 8:** *Raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. Luke 21:28*

**Dec. 15:***Prepare the way of the Lord; behold, the Lord God comes with might.  Isaiah 40:3, 10*

**Dec. 22:***My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:46-47*

**Dec. 29:***Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation. Luke 2:29-30*

**FOR ADULTS:**

**Dec. 1:***I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6*

**Dec. 8:** *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9*

**Dec. 15:***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

 *Eph. 2:8-9*

**Dec. 22:***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

**Dec. 29:** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28* ******

Pastor Deal will be attending Symposia January 21st (Tuesday) through 25th (Friday). Please contact Barry Nelson, Elder Chairman, if in need of pastoral care during this time. (724-866-7417).

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**Those who get** **mail from the church mailbox** are asked to double check to make certain that it has been delivered correctly. Some of our neighbors having been getting our mail and have not received mail which they have been expecting. If something has been incorrectly delivered, please give it to Diane so that it can be redirected to the proper address.

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Make certain to pick-up the January issue of ***The Lutheran Beacon*** which is available in the narthex. You may also read the Lutheran Beacon on-line at [**www.selc.lcms.org**](http://www.selc.lcms.org/)**.**

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Sincere thanks go out to those individuals and families who purchased **POINSETTIAS** to adorn our sanctuary this past Christmas season. Please make certain to take your plant(s) home following worship January 5th. Paper sleeves will be found outside the sanctuary that morning to help protect your plant(s). Flowers not picked up will be disposed of unless you have notified Diane in writing with other arrangements.

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Make sure to check out the bulletin board in the main hallway to read Christmas cards and greetings which we have received from former members and church friends. Cards and letters will be posted through the end of the month of January.

**2020 Offering Envelopes** are available for pick up in the narthex. Please make certain that the number noted on the top of the box is the same as that on the envelopes. Also, note that the very first envelope in your offering box is the “Initial offering” which is intended for use to help cover the cost of the envelopes. This amount is approximately $4.00 per box.

 Thank you!

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**January’s Hymn of the Month:**

**“O Jesus Christ Thy Manger Is”(LSB #372)**

 O Jesus Christ,
 Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
 For there, O Lord,
 Doth lie the Word
Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forth shineth.

 He whom the sea
 And wind obey
Doth come to serve the sinner in great meekness.
 Thou, God’s own Son,
 With us art one,
Dost join us and our children in our weakness.

 Thy light and grace
 Our guilt efface,
Thy heav’nly riches all our loss retrieving.
 Immanuel,
 Thy birth doth quell
The pow’r of hell and Satan’s bold deceiving.

 Thou Christian heart,
 Whoe’er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
 For God’s own Child,
 In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!

 Remember thou
 What glory now
The Lord prepared thee for all earthly sadness.
 The angel host
 Can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.

 The world may hold
 Her wealth and gold;
But thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true treasure.
 To Him hold fast
 Until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure.

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

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**Mission Outreach Project…**

**International Christian Literature Distributors, Inc.** focuses on getting the Bible and study materials to learn the Bible into the hands of Christian leaders in the least-fortunate places of the world. They supply churches and schools of Bible learning throughout the English speaking world. Your old Portals of Prayer, Advent/Lenten devotions, and other materials are greatly appreciated. For more information about ICLD, check out their website: [www.icld.org](http://www.icld.org/). **Please recycle these items by dropping them in the basket in the hallway by the offices. Thank you!**

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**We are currently seeking sponsors for the 2020 Coffee & Donuts Fellowship.**

If interested, please sign your name on the schedule in the narthex.

On the Sunday you’re scheduled, simply bring in 2-1/2 dozen donuts or pastries and 1 qt. orange juice. Please place items in the kitchen prior to the worship service.

Diane will take care of making the coffee, setting up, and cleaning up.

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**Portals of Prayer** for January-March 2020 are available in the narthex, chapel, and outside Pastor Deal’s office. Feel free to take a copy for a friend!

**CHURCH GIVING**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church:

 This past year has seen much discussion at Church Council and Voters’ meetings regarding church expenses and membership giving. In 2019, we were faced with some unforeseen expenses, such as the replacement of one of our boilers. A repair like this comes from our major repair fund and is unbudgeted. Many members donated this year to our major repair fund, even above and beyond their normal giving (for which we are so grateful), and we have had sufficient funds to pay for the boiler replacement. While our budgeted giving has remained stable this year, we have had some unplanned budgeted expenses and shortfalls which the church will need to cover using its savings.

 The boiler repair was expensive but is only the first of many projects the church is anticipating in the next 2-5 years. Some of the improvements / repairs we anticipate, such as replacing the entire church roof or the windows in the church, might cost up to $50,000 or $75,000.

 Although what I have just written may be daunting or discouraging, there is a relatively small change each of us could make in our personal giving which, collectively, would make a big impact. If our whole congregation increased its giving by $20/month –that’s $5/week, we would see an increase in giving of $15,000 annually. This increase might mean giving up something we currently enjoy like a few cups of coffee a week or having to pack a lunch, rather than buying it. It’s also possible not everyone can give an additional $20/month, but if we all sacrifice a bit and give as we can, some more and some less, it will make a big difference. Maintaining a change like this for a few years can pay for many upcoming improvements and repairs. It will also allow the church leadership and financial committee to plan more accurately for these projects.

 For those unable to financially help out more, there are other ways in which you can help with your time and talents. We are always looking for volunteers to help with tasks at the church, from normal upkeep of the property and special projects, to working with our community outreach efforts. If you are willing to help, speak with Pastor Deal or me and we will help find where you can provide the best assistance.

 Our church is currently debt-free. This is greatly due to sacrifices made by those who were here before us, many of them your family members. It is now time for us to step up and follow their example. This is our opportunity to insure that this building, our inheritance from those who came before us, is still here for us and others to hear the Word of God and to receive the blessed sacraments. This building is a symbol to our community; a place dedicated to the worship of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Please prayerfully consider how you may sacrifice to maintain its presence.

~Jonathan Baisch

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**Word of Hope: 1-888-217-8679**

The only 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL Hotline that is distinctly Lutheran, bringing healing found in Christ, to those whose hearts have been broken by abortion.

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Please do not leave money on the desk in the Church Office! Place payment for cards in the envelope provided on the card rack if purchasing from there. Any other money should be placed in a pew envelope labeled with your name and what it is for. It can then be put in the offering plate or secretary’s mail slot. We have no way of knowing what money simply left on a desk is designated for.

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If you have a mailbox in the library, you are asked to check it on a weekly basis. Please also make certain to remove mail from it so we know that you have read it. There is a trash can available in the library for you to throw away unwanted items.

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**Attention Church Auditors!**

Please put the following 2020 dates on your calendars for general auditing of church finances: Jan. 19, Apr. 19, July 12, and Oct. 11. All sessions will take place on Sundays following worship. Dates for auditing church deposits and the Food Pantry account will be decided upon at the Jan. 19th audit session.

The following note and $150 donation were received from the Sunday evening AA group: “On behalf of the Sunday Night AA group, (we) want to express our appreciation for the warm hospitality our group receives at your church. We are very grateful to have such a nice place to meet.

 We noticed that much work has been done down in the meeting area. When deciding our year-end disbursement, the group voted to maximize our donation to the church as a way of supporting the building work.

 Please accept this donation with our sincere gratitude.”

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**LOCAL MISSION: CAMPUS MINISTRY AT ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH,**

**SLIPPERY ROCK, PA**

At the December 15th Voters’ Assembly meeting, Campus Ministry at All Saints Lutheran Church in Slippery Rock, PA was selected as our 1st Quarter Local Mission for 2020. The Campus Ministry, under the direction of Rev. Larry Loree (campus pastor) and Mrs. Augusta Mennell (campus ministry director), seeks to serve students at Slippery Rock University.

 The following information about this ministry is taken from the website [www.rocklutheran.org/ministries](http://www.rocklutheran.org/ministries).

*Since the organization of All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Church as a congregation in 1977, the main outreach ministry has been to college students attending Slippery Rock University. Additionally, we have the pleasure of serving students attending nearby Grove City College.  We are also very grateful for the opportunity to connect with international students, many of whom are experiencing the United States for the first time.*

 *The official membership of All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center consists of about 25 families of various ages and make-ups. Throughout the Fall to Spring academic year, we have an average worship attendance of about 40-50 people. All Saints is known to be a community of Christian people who warmly receive students and welcome them with open arms.*

 *Many of our members have chosen to become adoptive families of international students who lack the familial support enjoyed by most American students. We recognize how difficult it must be for international students unfamiliar with American culture to become settled and acquainted with how things work. We do our best as a congregation to help meet students' needs, from providing rides to the grocery store, to providing coats, hats, and mittens to those who will experience their first cold and bitter winter.*

 *Once a month, for ALL STUDENTS, we host a homemade Korean meal provided by a dear friend of All Saints. These delicious meals are served on a Saturday evening and are offered FREE OF CHARGE and with NO OBLIGATION to further particpate in the church's ministries. This meal event is regularly attended by 50-80 students who enjoy their opportunity for free food and the conversations and new friendships that can result. Again, please note that these meals are open to all students, regardless of religious or cultural background.*

 *The following activities are provided to help enrich the faith of students so inclined:*

* *Sunday Worship*
* *Wednesday Evening Prayer*
* *Group Bible studies*
* *Individual (One-on-One) Bible studies with Mrs. Mennell (Director of Student Ministry) or Pastor Loree*
* *Biblical counseling (with 100% confidentiality)*
* *Servant event*
* *Spiritual retreat*

*All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center is a participating congregation in the* [*Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's*](http://www.rocklutheran.org/www.lcms.org) *official campus organization:* [*LCMSU (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod University)*](https://www.lcms.org/campus-ministry/find-lcms-u-chapter)*.*

Donations to this 1st Quarter Local Mission may be placed in pew envelopes and put in the offering plate. Please designate Local Mission and include your name on the envelope.

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