

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

PH# (979) 732-2423 Fax (979) 733-0489

E-mail: [admin@splctx.org](mailto:admin@splctx.org) [www.splctx.com](http://www.splctx.com) **Pastor:** [pastor.akethan@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.akethan@gmail.com)

September 3, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Fourteenth Sunday of Pentecost

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Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Congregational Chair			Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomasa Rosales
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** Love God, Love Neighbor (Luke 10:27)

**VISION STATEMENT:** We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshipping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***
- *Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.*

\* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

**INTRODUCTION**

*The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.*

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS**

*(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)*

\* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P We at times are stumbling blocks to Jesus' work, just like his first disciples. We try to be God and implore God to do things our way. We set our minds on earthly things and not on God. As we begin worship today, we know we carry with us the weight of sin. Jesus wants us to confess these sins to him; not for his sake, but our own. Jesus already knows what we do, don't do and think. We confess to acknowledge our need for help and that we are truly sorry for not being in line with what God wants. So we will take a few brief moments in silence to confess the things we have done, and the things done to us we still hold over others' heads. Then we will come back together to hear the promise and power of forgiveness.

*(Silence for private confession.)*

P "Comfort my people," says our God. "Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live." (Isaiah 40:1-2; Amos 5:12) By the power invested in me by my ordination, I proclaim to you the forgiveness of your sins in the name of Jesus Christ.

**C Amen.**

**GOSPEL SONG: IN CHRIST ALONE**

In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song.  
This Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm thru the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease,  
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

**In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.  
The gift of love, and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save.  
'Til on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied,  
For every sin on Him was laid. Here in the death of Christ, I live.**

**GOSPEL:** Matthew 16:21-28

*After Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Jesus reveals the ultimate purpose of his ministry. These words prove hard to accept, even for a disciple whom Jesus has called a "rock."*

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 16, verses 21-28.

<sup>21</sup>From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."  
<sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." <sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? <sup>27</sup>"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

#### **GOSPEL SONG: IN CHRIST ALONE**

**There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain.  
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again.  
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me.  
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.**

**No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me.  
From life's first cry, to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand  
'Til He returns, or calls me home, there in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.**

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#### **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

##### **SERMON**

#### **\* SERMON SONG: LEAD ME TO THE CROSS**

**Savior I come, quiet my soul, remember.  
Redemption's hill, where Your blood was spilled for my ransom.  
Ev'rything I once held dear, I count it all as loss.**

##### **CHORUS**

**Lead me to the cross where Your love poured out.  
Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.  
Rid me of myself, I belong to You!  
Oh, lead me – lead me to the cross.**

**You were as I, tempted and tried, human.  
The word became flesh, bore my sin and death, now You're risen!  
Ev'rything I once held dear, I count it all as loss.**

##### **CHORUS**

##### **BRIDGE**

**To your heart. . . To Your heart. . .  
Lead me to Your heart. . . Lead me to Your heart. . .**

##### **LAST CHORUS**

**Lead me to the cross where Your love poured out.  
Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.  
Rid me of myself, I belong to You! Oh, lead me – lead me!  
Lead me to the cross where Your love poured out.  
Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.  
Rid me of myself, I belong to You!  
Oh, lead me – lead me to the cross.**

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#### **\* APOSTLES' CREED**

**A** With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**C** **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)*

##### **PRAYERS**

**A** Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

**A** God of life, your words are the joy at the heart of your church. Draw the seeker to you, place messages of hope and healing in the mouths of your witnesses, and open your children to your truth when we stumble.

*A brief silence.*

A God of patience, lead those who govern to hold fast to what is good. Guide them to show honor to the people in their care. Overcome evil in all nations and grant peace to peoples and places mired in conflict especially in Ukraine, Sudan and Niger.

*A brief silence.*

A God of deliverance, give endurance to workers who persevere on this Labor Day and insure fair wages and safe working environments.

*A brief silence.*

A God of justice, equip this congregation to boldly follow you in uncertain times and to remain faithful in prayer when facing challenges. Show us how best to love and care for one another and our communities.

*A brief silence.*

A Providing God, we pray for farmers and ranchers as they continue to work hard to bring us food in this time of drought. Bless them as they sow crops and care for livestock. Send us rain to heal the earth and water to quench Your thirsty land. Let faith be born from our doubts, hope from our despair, and compassion from our troubles.

*A brief silence.*

A God of heaven, we pray for the family and friends of Darrell Rau who passed away this past week. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

*A brief silence.*

A God of love, we give you thanks and praise for the birth of Zayden Wayne Shorter to Eugene and Brooke Hernandez Shorter. Bless their family as they begin a new life together.

*A brief silence.*

A God of healing, we pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Sheila Kettering; Chris Schobel; Bill Orton; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

*A brief silence.*

A Heavenly God, we pray for those battling cancer, all expectant mothers, those who reside in care facilities and the homebound, all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel.

*{See all those we pray for on page 9.}*

*A brief silence.*

A God of mission, we pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and their Pastor Armando Capcha and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad and their leaders Pastors Gumer and Naomi Anton in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

*A brief silence.*

A Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

**C Amen.**

**\* PEACE**

P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

***(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)***

**OFFERING and POWER OF ONE**

*"Power of One" is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These "Power of One" dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.*

**\* OFFERING PRAYER**

P God of power, God of plenty, all things belong to you. We bring your gifts to the table, that all might be fed. Form us into the body of your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**C Amen.**

**\* REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS**

**\* LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

\* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P Jesus invites you to this table. Come, eat and live.

C **Amen.**

**DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION** (Continuous with Individual Cups)

*{Distribution will be continuous. **All are welcome for communion.** Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor "Gluten-free, please." Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}*

\* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P Blessed be your name, O God, for we have feasted on your Word, Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts. Strengthened by this food, send us to gather the world to your banquet, where none are left out and all are satisfied. In Jesus' name we pray.

C **Amen.**

\* **BLESSING**

P The God of glory, ☩ Jesus Christ, name above all names, and the Spirit who lives in you, bless you now and forever.

C **Amen.**

\* **CLOSING SONG: FOR THE CROSS**

**I will love You for the cross. And I will love You for the cost.**

**Man of Sufferings, bringer of my peace.**

**You came into a world of shame, and paid the price we could not pay.**

**Death that brought me life, blood that brought me home.**

**Death that brought me life, blood that brought me home.**

**CHORUS:**

***And I love You for the cross! I'm overwhelmed by the mystery.***

***I love You for the cost; that Jesus, You would do this for me.***

***When You were broken, You were beaten, You were punished... I go free.***

***When You were wounded and rejected, in Your mercy... I am healed.***

**Jesus Christ, the sinner's friend, does this kindness know no bounds?**

**With Your precious blood, You have purchased me.**

**Oh, the myst'ry of the cross! You were punished, You were crushed.**

**But that punishment has become my peace.**

**Yes, that punishment has become my peace. CHORUS TWICE**

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\* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. Follow the example of Jesus.

C **Thanks be to God, and we will.**

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**USHERS:** John, Terri & Chase Brasher

**LAY READER:** Mike Hackfeld

**STREAMING:** Mike Maas

**SOUND:** Sydney Eaton & Todd Jacobs

**ACOLYTE:** Berkley Anderson

**POWER POINT:** Peggy Geisler

**ALTAR GUILD:** Ilene Schindler

**WELCOME:** Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church! As we transition from summer to fall, God leads us, steady in love and care, even as our seasons change. Let us worship.

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by George & Patsy Kopecky in celebration of their 54<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on September 6.

**ADDITIONAL FLOWERS** are placed by Lawrence & Belle Dungen in thanks for God's many blessings and in celebration of their 64<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on September 5.

We extend our Christian sympathy to the family and friends of Darrell Rau, Jr. who passed away August 28, 2023. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

▪ A great big **"Thank you"** to all who thought of me and prayed for me during my recent illness. May God grant us all good health. Thank you! – *Dr. Cecil Marburger*

♥ To my church family at St. Paul Lutheran Church ---

How is it possible to convey to each and every one of you who have been so kind and thoughtful to our families since Whitey's death. The Lord is surely in this place – and I mean the whole area. His presence is felt every day in my heart when someone else calls or texts, sends cards, food, or stops by. Yes, I've been surrounded, supported and loved. To all of you, I am grateful. – *Jo Dean Robb*

**Congratulations!!** Eugene and Brooke Hernandez Shorter are pleased to announce the birth of their son **Zayden Wayne Shorter**. Zayden Wayne was born Friday, August 25, 2023 at 5:16 PM. He weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 20½ inches long. Proud grandparents are Bradley and Jill Hernandez and Eugene and Stephanie Shorter. Proud great-grandparents are Bennie and Susan Hernandez.

**COLLECTION OF OFFERING:** Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes "Power of One" dollars.

**Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses:** \$8,405.00

**Attendance:** Aug. 26 & 27, 2023 – 171

**Contributions:** Aug. 26 & 27 – \$7,968.96

**Power of One:** Aug. 26 & 27, 2023 – \$58.00

**Building Fund:** Aug. 26 & 27 – \$151.44

*Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.*

**Wednesday Night Attendance:** – Wed., Aug. 30 – **91 Total**

**BLAST/Confirmation:** 73

**Support Staff:** 18

**ATTENTION:** Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

**KEEP IN OUR PRAYERS: Those Battling Cancer:** Tom Russell, Jr.; Melda Coleman; Al Gene Canik; Larry Bookout; Mike Wostarek; Elizabeth Frisby; Virginia Fritsch; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Carl Geisler; Laura Walla; Dorothy Wicke; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Michelle Thraen; Lydia Rojas; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; Bob Loy.

**Expectant Mothers:** Olivia Leyendecker; Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert.

**Those in Care Facilities and Homebound:** Melvin Otto; Joey Denby; Edwin Oevermann; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher. **Homebound:** Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb.

**Those Law Enforcement Officers:** Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Zane Weido; Josh Jones. **Fire Fighters, First Responders, Healthcare Workers and 9-1-1 Dispatchers:** Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Nathan Bookout; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neuendorff. **Active Duty Military:** Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please**

**place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.**

Thank you! ☺



**PRAYER LISTS:** As you know from recent church and bulletin announcements as well as the August newsletter, we asked for your help to update our prayer lists. As of August 15, our lists have been cut down considerably. If you would like to have someone added back to the lists, please contact the church office. You can stop by in person, call at 979-732-2423 or send an email to admin@splctx.org. Thank you!

+ The **Noon Bible Study group** that meets on Tuesdays in the church library will be taking a brief break and **will not be meeting in September**. They will resume class Tuesday, October 3, 2023 and will be studying I & II Thessalonians and Jude. Everyone is invited to attend! +

**Meals to Heal:** Meals to Heal will have a cook session on Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 10:00 AM in the Lighthouse kitchen. We will be making two main dish casseroles, bagging vegetables, and assembling meals to go in the freezer. Join us if you can! Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.

• **Senior Explorers are Going Behind the Scenes!!** Come with us behind the scenes at Brookwood Community Center in Brookshire, Texas. The Brookwood Community provides an educational environment that creates meaningful work, builds a sense of belonging, and awakens genuine purpose in the lives of adults with disabilities. We will have a guided tour of the centers programs and finish the tour with a meal at the famous Brookwood Cafe. We will **depart** St. Paul Lutheran Church **Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 8:15 AM** to arrive in time for our tour at 9:15 AM. The tour will conclude with lunch starting at 11:00 AM. We will allow some time for shopping in the Brookwood store following lunch. We plan to return to the church by 2:00 PM. There is no cost for the tour. Please sign up in the narthex (foyer) TODAY. If you have any questions, please call Kevin Page at 979-732-0845.

**Men In Mission:** Men In Mission is a group of men of all ages who meet each month in The Lighthouse. Breakfast is served, which typically includes conversations pertaining to sports, the arts, entertainment, etc.. We then have a short devotion, discussion, then close with the Lord's Prayer. If you are seeking a closer connection to the men of St. Paul, this is an excellent way to do so. You will make friends for life. Come join us on **Saturday, September 9, 2023 at 8:00 AM!**



**Colorado County Fair Concessions!!** The St. Paul Lutheran Youth and St. Paul Christian Learning Academy once again have been given the opportunity to take on the concession stand this year at the Colorado County Fair. This is such a beneficial fundraiser and a lot of fun working with everyone! We are excited to again be a part of this community event, however, it is a big task, and we will need your help. The carnival and rodeo will be **September 14, 15, & 16, 2023**, and we will cover all three days from **3:00 PM to**

**10:00 PM.** A shift and cooker schedule is posted in the narthex (foyer) as well as other ways you can volunteer to help with this fundraiser. If you are a good cook, cashier, organizer, supply runner or just have a heart for serving, we need you! All proceeds will go to support the St. Paul Lutheran youth programs and the St. Paul Christian Learning Academy. If you would like to know more or be a part of the planning team, please contact Stephanie Polasek at 979-732-1858.

♥♥ Our next **Marriage Course** will be every Sunday, **September 17-October 29, 2023**. On these Sunday nights from **6:00-8:00 PM** in the Lighthouse this seven-week course will take place. We realize that strong marriages make strong families, and strong families make strong communities. The Marriage Course is relevant for any couple wanting to invest in their relationship and make it stronger. Whether you have been married four months, 40 years or cohabitating and not married; you feel your marriage is fine, good, great, struggling or stuck; this course is for you. The course is more like a date night. There will be dinner and dessert mixed in with video presentations and discussion questions for you and your partner. You will not be asked to share anything about your relationship with anyone but your partner. **Cost is \$150** – this includes meals, workbooks and video materials. If you need childcare, the cost is an additional \$35 for the seven weeks. This course is limited to 11 couples. Sign up in the office or call Elena Monday-Friday during business hours to get your name on the list. When you sign up, please indicate if you will need childcare.

► **Volunteers Wanted!** If you are interested in helping with the Marriage Course (technical team; set-up/take down; server; etc.) please see the sign-up sheet in the narthex. Various opportunities are listed. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Alan.

**BLOOD DRIVE:** A blood drive will be held in the Lighthouse on **Sunday, September 24, 2023 from 8:00 AM-12:30 PM**. You can sign up online by scanning the QR code on the poster in the hallway or by going to [www.giveblood.org](http://www.giveblood.org). **Sponsor code is P732**. You may also call or text Melinda Zajicek at 979-820-8793 to sign up to donate. Also, if you can help the day of the drive, please let Melinda know. Thank you for your donations! Put the next blood drive on your calendar, too, which will be *Sunday, December 3, 2023!*

**Peru Team Meeting:** Our next Peru Team meeting will be **Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 5:00 PM** in the church library. Join us to get an update on Pastor Alan's trip to Peru in July and discuss how we can best serve our South American neighbors. If you have any question, please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.



**CONNECTED TO CHRIST:** It's the beginning of a new school year, and we need **names and addresses for all of our 2023 high school graduates and all others that are still in college!** Connected to Christ is a ministry of St. Paul that keeps our new graduates and college students connected to St. Paul with fun, Christian-based mailings four times a year. So students and/or family members, please send the name and address of your

student to either Terri Brasher at (979)-732-1127, Stephanie Polasek at (979)-732-1858 or the church office. Thank you!



**Pictures Needed!!** I am in the process of changing all song backgrounds to royalty-free pictures for Power Point. Please send me any pictures of backgrounds (trees, rivers, oceans, mountains, etc.) you may have taken on your vacation. You can email them to [peggeisler@gmail.com](mailto:peggeisler@gmail.com). Thanks! – *Peggy Geisler*

♥ **Grief Support Group:** Are you experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of friend who has moved? The Grief Support Group is a place to share and discuss these issues with other individuals. The group meets the **third Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 PM in the church library**. For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

#### **SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

<b>Mon., Sept. 4 –</b>	<b>Office Closed! (Labor Day)</b>
<b>Tues., Sept. 5 –</b>	9:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Deanery 11:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library) 6:30-8:00 PM – The Gathering
<b>Wed., Sept. 6 –</b>	9:00 AM – CLA Chapel 12:00 PM – Ministerial Alliance 1:30-3:00 PM – Continuing Education (library) 5:00 PM – Meal 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & HS Youth
<b>Thurs., Sept. 7 –</b>	Stephanie to Youth Ministry Network 8:15 AM-2:00 PM – SR. Explorers to Brookwood, Brookshire 10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to The Oaks 1:00 PM – Pastor Alan in Stewardship Class 5:30 PM – Youth & Education Team 6:00 PM – Property Team
<b>Fri., Sept. 8 –</b>	10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
<b>Sat., Sept. 9 –</b>	8:00 AM – Men In Mission (Lighthouse) 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
<b>Next Sun., Sept 10 –</b>	9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School & Confirmation 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

#### **UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

**Saturday, September 9, 2023 Peter Claver, priest, missionary to Colombia, died 1654**  
Born into Spanish nobility, Claver became a Jesuit missionary, and served in present-day Colombia. His ministry was focused on the enslaved people who arrived there. He gave them food and medicine, learned their dialects, and taught them Christianity.

**OTHER READINGS:** Jeremiah 15:15-21

*Jeremiah's delight in the word of the LORD is contradicted by the heaviness of God's hand upon him and God's seeming unfaithfulness. God's tough love to Jeremiah says that if he repents, he will be allowed to continue in his strenuous ministry. Jeremiah is strengthened by the simple words, "I am with you."*

The reading begins:

<sup>15</sup>O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance do not take me away; know that on your account I suffer insult. <sup>16</sup>Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. <sup>17</sup>I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation. <sup>18</sup>Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail. <sup>19</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD: If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them. <sup>20</sup>And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD. <sup>21</sup>I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

**PSALM:** Psalm 26:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived with integrity; I have trusted in the LORD and have not faltered. <sup>2</sup>Test me, O LORD, and try me; examine my heart and my mind. <sup>3</sup>For your steadfast love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you. <sup>4</sup>I have not sat with the worthless, nor do I consort with the deceitful. <sup>5</sup>I have hated the company of evildoers; I will not sit down with the wicked. <sup>6</sup>I will wash my hands in innocence, O LORD, that I may go in procession round your altar, <sup>7</sup>singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and recounting all your wonderful deeds. <sup>8</sup>LORD, I love the house in which you dwell and the place where your glory abides.

**OTHER READINGS:** Romans 12:9-21

*Paul presents benchmarks for faithful relationships with Christians and non-Christians. Love is the unflagging standard of our behavior. When we encounter evil, we do not resort to its tactics but seek to overcome it with good. While Christians cannot control the actions and attitudes of others, we seek to live at peace with all people.*

The reading begins:

<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs

of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**SERVICE OVERVIEW: THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY!**

Peter may be the "rock" on which Christ will build the church, but when Jesus reveals the suffering that will come first, Peter becomes a tempter and "stumbling block." Assuming God must have a different way to save the world, Peter protests Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus explains to Peter and all his disciples that, in fact, this is the way to life: losing one's life in order to find it.

By tempting Jesus to an easier way than his journey through suffering to resurrection, Peter personifies a temptation common to all generations of Jesus' disciples: seeking a way to avoid "losing oneself," instead of surrendering all to and with the one we follow. Rather than losing our lives, our selves, possessions, and time, we hold on more tightly, afraid of what will happen to our comfort, success, and identity if we let go. Those things we hold onto then become, like Peter, stumbling blocks along the way of self-giving love.

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

In last week's gospel reading, Jesus praised his disciple Peter. Today Peter is rebuked! Peter protests when he hears about the impending suffering Jesus must endure. Like Peter, it is so easy for us to react to things we cannot accept. Peter's problem is that he sees only the suffering and death without grasping the new life that comes through it. Welcome to worship! Receive the life that only Jesus can give.

This is the way of our God who becomes human in Jesus: emptying himself of power and dignity and losing his very own life for the sake of the world's life. Like Peter, we also believe that surely God must have an easier way than the way of self-giving love, especially in times when we too are tempted by worldly ways of comfort and success. Jesus' love for Peter (and us) is too real and too strong to allow us to be distant from the realities of the cross. How do we deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus in our current lives?

To stand at the foot of the cross, to witness the suffering of an innocent man, is to be humbled in a profound way. We don't acknowledge the suffering of others. Can you identify communal and structural sins that keep us from a life of wholeness and connection? How does picking up our own cross involve witness, restoration, healing, and connection?

To take up a cross as Jesus did is to stand, always, in the center of the world's pain. It's difficult, but have you ever considered a mindset that your comfort isn't worth it unless the least and the lost can share in it, too? In what ways might this resonate with how you relate and how we relate as a church community to the surrounding community? How might this call to stand in solidarity and embody the discomfort of people often placed at the margins of society help you understand taking up your cross daily?

**KID STUDY:**

You have potential. What does that mean? It means you have things that make you special and abilities that can be developed that will lead to making the world a better place. Jesus sees great potential in you. That is why he has called you to become his *disciple*, or *student*. Will it be easy? No. Jesus once told his followers that to be his disciple would be very difficult. *"If any of you want to be my follower, you must forget about yourself, take up your cross, and follow me."* He meant that to be Jesus's hands and feet, we have to learn to get out of our comfort zone. We have to figure out all the gifts each of us has been given to serve our world. We have to learn to forgive other people who sin against us. We have to take care of people who need our help. None of these things are easy or convenient, but when we do the work and share God's love with the world, we will know the real joy that comes from being a follower of Jesus.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*The cross is laid on every Christian. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins: the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life. As Christ bears our burdens, so ought we to bear the burdens of our fellowman. The law of Christ, which it is our duty to fulfill, is the bearing of the cross. My brother's burden which I must bear is not only his outward life, his natural characteristics and gifts, but quite literally his sin. The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the word of forgiveness - the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (NY: Macmillan, 1963), 99-100.]*

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**Next Week's Theme (Sept. 9 & 10):** What to do when someone sins against you

**Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 9 & 10):**

**First Reading:** Ezekiel 33:7-11 *"The prophet's responsibility to warn the people."*

**Psalms:** Psalm 119:33-40 *"I desire the path of your commandments." (Ps. 119:35)*

**Second Reading:** Romans 13:8-14 *"Live honorably as in the day."*

**Gospel:** Matthew 18:15-20 *"Reconciliation in the community of faith."*