St. Paul’s Epistle
July 1st, 2020

No Matter Who You Are, Or Where You Have Been, There Is A Place For You At St. Paul’s

www.stpaulsyr.org
Dear sisters and brothers,

Looking back at the past three months, I have one overwhelming response: gratitude and appreciation for the people and staff of St. Paul's Church. Through the challenges and uncertainty, I have been surrounded by people acting from a foundation of grace, faith and love given to us by God:

- Members caring for one another with phone calls, letters, emails, food deliveries and physically distanced visits.
- Vestry and team leaders working with open minds and caring hearts, making extra efforts to respond to our quickly changing needs.
- New and experienced leaders creating new opportunities for community and connection at the time when we need it most.
- Staff members working together with skill and flexibility in order to serve our members.

Looking ahead to the next three months, we will be taking the first steps toward gradually resuming in-person activities. Please read our Sr. Warden’s report on pp. 4-5 for more information about the reopening of our building. As we take these first steps, our ultimate concern is for the health and well-being of our members. To that end, all of our current online activities will continue until a Coronavirus vaccine has been widely distributed in our community. It is likely we will begin to hold some meetings and events in a hybrid format, that is some members might choose to come to church but others would ‘Zoom’ in through their home computer or mobile device. Be on the lookout for a letter from me in about two weeks; it will include the details of our reopening plan.
Looking ahead to 2021, we have one very significant activity that will be moving forward as planned: our Open Doors project. Our building is the place that is dedicated to the purpose of coming together as God’s people; it is where we welcome people with all sorts of needs and gifts into this blessed community; it is where we see the face of Christ in the faces of strangers and our most familiar friends. So we look forward to returning to our building, and we look forward to the work that will be accomplished in the Open Doors project. Open Doors has four purposes:

- Increased, universal access to our building.
- Improved space for mission activities.
- Renovation and modernization of our facility.
- Preservation of our building, so that future members and generation will continue to experience and witness God’s love in the center of the city.

After three months of not gathering in these beloved, handsome spaces we will be making a concerted effort to re-engage with the Open Doors project in the next two months. The July 15th issue of The Epistle will be devoted to the details of Open Doors and will be delivered to your mailbox. Please hold onto this photo filled edition of The Epistle as a reference as we continue our conversations about Open Doors in August and through the Fall.

I am very grateful to be here, seeking to fulfill the mission of St. Paul’s, with you!

Fr. Philip
Most of us have now settled into a new pattern of how we are a church during this time but we do long to be together in person and in our church building again. While we are getting comfortable with Zoom meetings and streaming services, which has been the healthy and right thing to do for the last several months, the isolation we feel is not good for our mental health; we are anxious to resume our old ways of worship and meeting as a parish family. New York State and Central New York have done a good job of fighting this virus and we want to be sure that we keep moving in the right direction and not roll backward! Most of all we want our members to be safe and healthy. Our re-opening will be done slowly and carefully.

I continue to meet weekly via Zoom with other wardens in our Diocese. Father Philip meets weekly with the Bishop and other Diocesan leaders as well. Together we are all working to discern how and when we can safely gather again in our buildings. The Diocese has provided guidelines which are updated regularly as more is learned about this disease and how we should appropriately behave to protect us from this virus. You can find the latest version of “Steps for the Journey to Gathering Anew” on the Diocesan Website here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iWeE1uwN_jNF8bYsVOZH47CZJ92RLJsHqgsn-AohGyc/edit#heading=h.q5comkparwai These guidelines help parishes understand what they should do to enter what the Diocese is calling Step Two “early regathering.”

St. Paul’s is working on our plan. Dick Pilgrim with a small task force has completed a covenant to be signed by our Rector and Wardens for Diocesan approval before we can open our building in any way. In this covenant we outline our commitment to upholding the Diocesan guidelines as well as NY State requirements for safety. The Vestry began to talk this
week of what we might specifically do in our early re-gathering steps; this conversation will continue at our July meeting. Here are some of the new parameters for early re-gathering:

- 15 people may be in the building at one time
- 25 people may gather outside for services where it is safer
- We may have baptisms
- We may have communion (without the wine)

With these in mind we are considering these suggestions from Father Philip:

- An 8 am worship service in the Nave with no singing/music for no more than 15 people (including Fr. Philip)
- A 10 a.m. live streaming service from the Nave as is offered now with singing/music
- A Sunday evening/late afternoon service outside in a park (Lemp?)
- Initially we would not offer communion but will gradually work toward that.
- Meetings such as Vestry might be held via Zoom and in person. Some folks could be in the church building and others could attend on Zoom. Other groups might meet this way as well or all in the church if the group is small (e.g. Feminist Theology)
- We could offer baptisms later in the summer

Before any kind of re-opening can happen we must do some significant cleaning of our building which has been empty and gathering a bit of dust for over 3 months! We are working to secure a cleaning service or part time sexton to help us with this. In our covenant with the Diocese we commit to upgrading some of our bathrooms to have touchless faucets and towel dispensers as well as toilets with lids.

We are working hard to get there! What do you think? Please complete the members’ survey if you haven’t already. (You will find this on the church website.) This will certainly help us with our planning.

Feel free to contact me, Tom, Father Philip or a vestry member with your thoughts. Look for a letter from Fr. Philip with details about the resumption of in-person activities at St. Paul’s in your mailbox around July 18th. Stay strong!
Congratulations to Isaiah Cordova who graduated from Liverpool High School.

Congratulations to Hannah McCloskey who also graduated from Liverpool High School in June.
Upcoming Services

July 5th, 2020 ~ Fourth Sunday After Pentecost
Hymns: 554, 692, 719
The First Lesson: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67
The Response: Song of Solomon 2:8-13
The Second Lesson: Romans 7:15-25

July 12th 2020 ~ Fifth Sunday After Pentecost
Hymns: 290, 511, 291
The First Lesson: Genesis 25:19-34
The Response: Psalm 119:105-112  BCP, p. 772
The Second Lesson: Romans 8:1-11
The Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Epistle Deadline

The July 15th Epistle will be devoted to our Open Doors project. The August Epistles will be combined into a single issue we will publish on August 15th. Deadline is Sunday, August 9th.

“I hope the church reopens soon. We’re nearly through the youth group’s snacks.”
Ice Cream Social Anyone?
—By Betsy Elkins, Senior Warden

Does anyone like ice cream? Anyone want to see some of their St. Paul’s friends for a physically distanced gathering? Zoom Coffee hour is great but I would love to see folks in person. Let’s meet at the Ice Cream Stand on **Friday night July 17 at 7 p.m.** That’s at 200 W. Water Street, at the west end of Clinton Square. Parking should not be a problem. There is plenty of space to spread out in Clinton Square to chat as we enjoy the evening and ice cream.

Just Mercy, the Book or the Movie
—By Betsy Elkins, Senior Warden

In keeping with my effort to educate myself about racial injustice I took the time to watch the movie *Just Mercy* recently. I had read the book a few years ago and the movie was just as powerful. The movie is based on a true story of Bryan Stevenson, a black lawyer who has spent his career defending those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper representation. This is the story of his unrelenting efforts to defend a man accused of murder and sentenced to death, despite evidence of his innocence. The racism he encounters is astounding and an eye opener for sure. I highly recommend this movie. You may even find it is available to view free.

Feminist Theology
—By Laurie Sanderson

Last month we were thrilled to have Marilyn Sharron join us from California via Zoom! We have decided to keep meeting through the summer and will meet via Zoom on Tuesday, July 21st at 7pm. This month we will be looking at *Jesus Freak* by Sarah Miles, a favorite author or ours. All are welcome to join. Questions? Call Laurie at 315-420-1518.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, July 1</strong></td>
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<td>SPC Readers- Zoom RSVP w/ Rev. Kathy Major</td>
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<td>Evening Prayer w/Music for Inspiration-Live Stream</td>
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<td>South Sudanese Prayers- Zoom</td>
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<td>Compline with Words for Inspiration- Live Stream</td>
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<td>Gardener’s Group- Zoom RSVP w/Jessica King</td>
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<td>Vestry Meeting- Zoom</td>
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<td>Compline with Words for Inspiration- Live Stream</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, July 15</strong></td>
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**Father Philip’s Office Hours**

Feel free to contact Father Philip at 315 422-7914.

His office hours are:

- Tuesday 12-2 p.m.
- Thursday 1-3 p.m.
From one of my mentors, Dr. Wolf Wolfenbserger, I learned that financial considerations should be secondary to the mission and values of an organization… for example, it was better that people with development disabilities live in a residence as close to the norm as possible rather than in large, congregated, isolated settings even though it might cost more in the community setting. After working with David Ridings for many years, I agree with him that mission activities suffer in the absence of good fiscal over-sight and practices.

The social distancing for St. Paul's, created by the pandemic, has created some challenges as well as opportunities for learning on how we may practice our faith as an Episcopal community into the future.

For example, we've learned new ways to celebrate our times of worship, our pastoral care, our outreach, care of our facilities, and identification of needed skill sets for staff and volunteers.

Some have learned new ways of continuing their financial support… specifically, by submitting their pledge online, or, mailing a check since we are unable to place our gifts into the offering plates.

Although it would be premature to say that we should be fine for the rest of 2020, I do remain cautiously optimistic.

The 2020 annual budget anticipated a shortfall of approximately $24,000… as of the end of May, the following are highlights of financial reports reviewed monthly by the members of the Finance Committee:

- Pledges received are tracking favorably compared to 2019. If things continue at this pace, there would be a shortfall in pledging compared to
the budget of approximately $5 - $6,000 by the end of the year.

- Certain significant expenses are seasonal: for example, in recent years approximately 75% of the annual utility costs are for the first six months of the year; 2020 is on a similar pace so pending unforeseen conditions we should fall within the budget by the end of the year.

- Much of our costs are related to personnel expenses: this is an area that we pay particular attention to; the change in staffing coupled with any unforeseen expenses will impact our budget; it is anticipated that personnel costs will drop throughout the rest of 2020.

- Payroll Protection Program: as you may know from media coverage, the PPP program was implemented by the Federal Government; Rebecca Livengood and I worked on the application process and the parish received a “loan” of almost $60,000; it is anticipated that a large portion of the “loan” will be converted to a “grant” and that portion will be available for specific operating purposes; any portion that is not waived will be returned to the lender. This unbudgeted PPP income has the potential to most dramatically impact our budget.

- Major Renovations is another significant expense in the budget ($35,000): to date we have not needed to undertake any major renovation. This also has the potential to reduce our annual costs… but, with a facility of our size and age, the prudent approach might be to place any unused funds into a reserve for future projects.

Please contact David Ridings, Chair of the Finance Committee, or myself if you have any questions.

Thank you for you continued financial support.
Thank you to the People of St. Paul’s
From John Pizzi

Dear Friends,

I would like to thank all who donated towards my cash gift that I received on May 29th. I would like to thank everyone who sent or gave me cards containing gifts.

To the Women of St. Paul’s who gave me a gift that was above and beyond; thank you. To the people who sent cards to my house offering kind words; thank you.

I have been blessed working at jobs for the past 35 years in which I looked forward to getting up and going to work, making many life long friends along the way.

I still have a habit of waking up at 5:00 a.m. The only difference now is I can turn over and go right back to sleep. As I look forward to my next challenge, I decided to take time for myself and spend as much time on my boat on Oneida Lake with a sign at my house that says; Gone Fishing.

Thank you and peace, John

Hello From Carol Decker

According to the Bishop, it will be a long time before we are eating together. As we enter Phase 4 of reopening the economy, I need the prayers from Baptism more than ever: “Sustain me, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give me an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you.”

Then I think of the young Mary, mother of Jesus, who said, “Let it be with me according to Your will.”

I give thanks for my many, many, blessings and hope you are all well.

—Carol
Love Your Neighbor: Wear a Mask
—By Father Philip

The months before the creation and distribution of a vaccine for the new coronavirus are a time when we urgently need to follow Jesus’ commandment to us: Love your neighbor as yourself. One of the most vivid ways we show our love for our neighbors is to wear a mask whenever we are in public spaces, and especially indoors. We wear masks, not to protect ourselves, but to protect those around us.

Since we will be wearing these face coverings for many months to come, and since we need a supply of masks on hand in order to begin to hold in-person meetings at St. Paul’s, Judy has been working with a supplier to procure a supply of comfortable, washable fabric face masks. The design incorporates St. Paul’s logo and a message: Love Your Neighbor: Wear a Mask.

Our face masks will arrive in about two weeks. We will be offering them to our members, free of charge. Look for more information in the coming weeks in the e-blast.

Prayer Warriors

We have a group of parishioners who are our prayer warriors. Please, if you have someone in need, or if you yourself need prayers please let Father Philip, Betsy Elkins, or Laurie Sanderson know. Thank you.
We are created in the image of God, but over the course of years we move further away from the center of life. This has something to do with our habit of leaning more strongly into our strengths and familiar patterns of behavior as years progress. In his book about the Enneagram, Fr. Richard Rohr describes the way we move further from ‘the center’: *We cling too much to what comes our way naturally.*

Jesus invites each one of us to move back into the center, close to God. The goal of using the Enneagram is to become more whole persons, more of what God created us to be. The Enneagram is a lens for self-reflection. It was created through a synthesis of religious and psychological studies in the middle of the 20th century. An increasing number of people have found the Enneagram gives them a new perspective on their behaviors, emotions and relationships.

I invite you to join with me in reflecting on our personal and spiritual journeys from the perspective of the Enneagram. This conversation will be an affirmation of the goodness God has created in each of us, and an examination and acknowledgment of the kinds of mistakes we find ourselves making, over and over again. We will begin with a five-hour workshop/retreat on Saturday, August 8th. The retreat will be for beginners and for those who have been wrestling with learnings from the Enneagram for months or years. Our topics will include:

- Three basic motivations: shame, anger and fear.
- Identifying your red flags.
- Moving in the direction of integration.

At the end of the retreat I will ask the group to determine whether, and how they might like to continue the conversation during the fall.

I expect that the retreat will be offered in a hybrid form; some participants may participate via video conference and some participants may participate in person, using physical distancing. The retreat is free and is limited to 10 participants. If you are interested in learning more about the Enneagram, even if you can't participate in the August 8th retreat, please write to me at revmajor@stpaulsyr.org.
Contemplative Studies & Practice
—By Sue Wright

Contemplative Studies & Practice
Tuesdays 4:00-5:00PM (via Zoom)
Start date: Tuesday, July 7th

4:00-4:30 we will discuss the Preface from the 2019 edition and the Introduction which appears in all editions of Thomas Keating’s Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel 20th Anniversary Edition

4:30-5:00 Instruction in Centering Prayer followed by 20 minutes of Centering Prayer

With so many disturbing events swirling around us, contemplative practice can provide a much needed refuge for grounding ourselves in the divine presence. In addition, by drawing on all the accumulated wisdom of the ages, our ongoing studies will seek ways that we as individuals and as community can bring peace, compassion, and transformation to a world in crisis.

Each week our sessions will begin by discussing (for approximately a half hour) an excerpt from a previously chosen text. For the first month or longer we will discuss Thomas Keating’s Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel 20th Anniversary Edition. As we progress we will choose other texts from Christian as well as other contemplative traditions. We suggest that you read the chosen text in advance, but it is not necessary.

The second half of each session will be dedicated to contemplative practice. For instance, on July 7th, we will provide a brief instructions in the practice of Centering Prayer as outlined in Keating’s book, followed by a period engaging in the prayer. Down the road we may decide to try a variety of contemplative practices.

The next regular Epistle will be August 15th. The deadline for that issue is Sunday, August 9th.