



“What are You Overwhelmed with?”

It is safe to say that everyone is overwhelmed with something these days. The coronavirus infection rate is approaching one percent of the U.S. population. That means one in a hundred have gotten it, leaving many, with their families, quite overwhelmed with pain, worry, and gasping for air.

Essential workers, particularly health care professionals and those earning minimum wage in stress-filled grocery stores, are suffering fatigue and exhaustion, perhaps even PTSD even though the ‘P’ for ‘post’ isn’t even applicable since the pandemic still goes on, as does their hard work. Pray for them!

The poor and the marginalized were already overwhelmed, especially black, brown, and immigrant Americans. The racist and elitist roots in our national family tree have been exposed by so many recent killings and other violent current events, as well as by the inequities revealed in the distribution of medical care, relief money, and other protections, and the alarming disparity in policing methods.

And then there are the women, and others, who suffer abuse at the hands of family members, left with a feeling that there is nowhere to turn. Voices cry out in every corner of the world today for justice, representation, or affirmation, such as our LGBTQIA+ communities. Parents, students, teachers, and school administrators are overwhelmed with a huge puzzle before them this fall 2020.

Many of us are overwhelmed with the scope of the division in our political landscape, tired of the deep rifts between people fueled by fear mongering and downright lies propagated as truth. Still others have been overwhelmed with natural disasters, like hurricane Laura in the south, tornadoes in the mid-west, or the wild fires blazing rampant out west.

If it is boredom that has you overwhelmed, maybe you’re one of the fortunate ones? Even then, for people suffering from addiction, the lack of things to do can be fatal. Depression is more prevalent in these times. Some are overwhelmed by loneliness, the lack of contact with anyone else, and, oh, the monotony! That can overwhelm us, too.

You are due for a reminder that staying home and sequestering is doing good. Here in New York State we’ve suppressed outbreaks of COVID-19 even as we slowly open up here and there. It is in that spirit of caution, care, and concern for the neighbor, as well as love, one for another, that we gingerly open up our church for in-person worship this month.

Follow your conscience. Pray for overwhelmed people the world over from your own home Sunday, or join us in person as we share Holy Communion together, less apart, but still distancing. Either way is okay because God is always with you. With all you may be overwhelmed with, remember Saint Paul’s words about how he, overwhelmed by the evil in his very own breast, proclaimed rescue from this “body of death” in Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. – Romans 7:25b—8:5 (NRSV)

Where Saint Paul’s letter to the faithful which assembled in Rome, a church community whom he had never met, says “set their minds on” he refers to “that which one is concerned with”. It’s whether their concern is their own flesh, and saving same by works of righteousness under the auspices of a merciless God of judgment, or their concern is the Spirit, which gives one the faith to believe and trust God’s grace, the true source of salvation, apart from works.

(Lead Article concludes on page 2)



DEACON'S CORNER

When I was watching one of the conventions last month, someone said, "Faith sees best in the dark." For some reason, that seemed to jump right out at me. So, the question becomes, how do we hold on to our faith in times like this? We have fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, racial unrest, animosity in our government, injustices, people suffering and dying from Covid 19 and I could go on. There have to be many questioning God right now. So how do we hold on to our faith in the times of darkness that we are going through?

Faith is about trusting, not so much understanding. It is the absolute trust in God, not self. Faith is not a single moment event but rather it is something that shapes our life and hope each day. If we never had the rain clouds or the darkness, we would never see the rainbows or the light. Jesus is that light and we need to hold on to that. Walking in faith is a gift from the Holy Spirit but it's also a struggle at the same time. So, we need to get through that struggle.

The last 5 months have been tough for everyone. We haven't been to church. We haven't hugged. We haven't seen each other. I personally had my niece's husband die of Covid and a couple of Lou's distant cousins died. This summer I was laid up with a nerve problem in my back so that's why you didn't see me assisting at worship. Oh, how I missed that. You won't see me in church for a while as I don't feel that comfortable to be there at this time. So, I'll be seeing you in my computer screen and singing nice and loud.

In a book called *It's All Right to Cry* this quotation is to be found: "Nobody is wise who does not know the darkness. I appreciate the dark hours of my existence in which my senses are sharpened." I'm sure all of you have stories to tell about the last 5 months. I know that some things that seemed important at the time, are not now and then again, some things that I didn't realize were important, became important. So, let's find the light, let's walk in the rain and know that, with God, all things will become new again.

Blessings,
— **Gale**

(Lead Article "...Overwhelmed..." continued from page 1)

The former concern for the flesh, as one trying to make themselves right before God, leaves one curved inward, only worried for themselves, and unable to do any true good out of love. They lack faith in God's promise that by grace you are already saved, freed from sin and death.

Meanwhile the latter concern, having minds set on the Holy Spirit, frees an individual to focus on others, to love as God loves, without conditions or fears to hold them back. Thanks to grace, there is no worry about being right with God, only confidence in God's love, forgiveness, and mercy, as revealed in Christ.

Ironically, people who serve others only to earn God's love look, on the outside, just like the Christian who serves others in response to God's love out of sheer gratitude. Martin Luther initially fell into that first category, overwhelmed with fear, doing everything he could to please God, but grew to detest this God who he could not ever do enough for.

Translating Saint Paul's letters it finally dawned on Luther that salvation is truly assured in Christ, grace alone, by faith alone, and not works. Out of joy he now poured himself into caring for the neighbor, just as God cares for him. Strangely, the cure for depression, which Luther seems to have suffered from, was always in helping to keep others from being overwhelmed by the world's many woes. Let us, then, be likewise overwhelmed, with compassion!

Overwhelmingly Yours,
— **Rev. Paul Downing**

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*St. Paul's ELC is part of the Metropolitan New York Synod www.mnys.org of the Evangelical Lutheran Church America (ELCA) www.elca.org.

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From the Treasurer's Desk

September 1, 2020

We have completed 8 months of our year and have 4 months to go. We have fallen slightly behind in our current giving at this point in the year. We should be at 66% of our projected income. We currently are at 58%. We need to watch this as we move into our last third of the year. Our expenses are falling in range for this time of the year.

We have had several large expenses associated with reopening. We had to purchase some new sound equipment to make our online services more clear. We installed a new hot spot from optimum which has helped greatly. The new microphones and sound board will enhance our broadcasting as well as our live services. We have sent a request for your support on this project. We hope you will contribute so that we will not deplete our memorial funds completely.

If anyone still has offerings for the 40 Days of Caring – our Lenten offerings, please place them in your offering in the next several weeks. This money will be forwarded to the ELCA's Hunger Appeal and will be used to help support some of the special hunger needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We will be designating our change for change funding for Practical Resources for Churches. This is the new name of the Parish Resource Center. The PRC operates 2 centers to help all of the congregations on Long Island. These centers are located in Patchogue and Commack. This year's fundraising event was cancelled during the pandemic. The PRC has been a great resource to us and we hope that you will continue supporting their

great efforts. They provide webinars, workshops, and a great deal of material that is used in our Sunday school.

Thank you to everyone who helped get our property in good shape for our reopening. Thank you June Sehlmeier, Dottie Meade, Marina Lynch, Ed Metcalf, Susan Baitz, Ann Mitromaras, and David Prosser for all of your hard work.

Respectfully submitted,
Stu Meade (Deacon)
Congregation Treasurer

Operation Christmas Child 2020

National Collection week for shoe boxes will be November 18th to 25th, 2020. It has been crazy times for all of us and I realized how difficult it is for some of us to wear these masks while shopping. So I propose an option, if it is easier for you to provide a monetary donation, also including the shipping fee of \$9, for me to do the shopping, please make check to Saint Paul's and indicate it is for Operation Christmas Child. We will do the shopping and fill the box for you. If your preference is to fill a box, they will be available in the back of the church. All boxes will need to be returned by Sunday, November 15th so I can bring to processing center on November 16th.

This pandemic is worldwide and, in the past, 168 million boxes have been delivered worldwide. Every shoebox gift is a tangible expression of God's love that brings joy and the Good News of Jesus Christ to a child in need. St Paul's has always been generous, any questions please call me.

Thank you,
Carol Fazio

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCH – IN PERSON SUNDAY WORSHIP

General Rules in Effect at Both Services

- ✓ Upon arrival, please maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between groups.
- ✓ Everyone must wear a mask at all times (except when directed by Pastor for Communion).
- ✓ Stop at welcome desk, have temperature taken, answer questions, and confirm contact info for tracing.
- ✓ Receive hand sanitizer and Communion wafers in wax paper envelopes, follow all Greeter instructions.
- ✓ Singing and spoken response by worship leaders only (hum or whisper) pastor may stop songs to enforce.
- ✓ Peace may be shared verbally (softly) and/or by physical sign, such as the Peace sign from the 1960s.
- ✓ Holy Communion, bread only, to be consecrated, shared, without contact as directed by the Pastor.
 - ✓ No physical contact, hugs, handshakes, etc. between different household groups.
 - ✓ There is no collection during services, offering plates will be available.
 - ✓ Rest rooms are open and will be sanitized after each use.

In the Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. (20 max.)

- 1) Please call 631-473-2236 if you plan to attend.
- 2) Enter Parking Lot from Maple Av or Bergen Pl.
- 3) Enter church through Breezeway door from Lot.
- 4) Welcome desk is inside, in the Breezeway.
- 5) Pew seating is limited, ushers will guide you.
- 6) Bulletins are placed in advance at your seats.
- 7) After service, ushers guide you out back doors.

Outdoor in Parking Lot at 5 p.m. (50 max.)

- 1) Please bring your own chairs if at all possible.
- 2) Enter north side only, via Maple. Bergen is closed.
- 3) Park in designated area, proceed to welcome desk.
- 4) Welcome desk is in the center of the Parking Lot.
- 5) Receive your bulletin at welcome desk.
- 6) Sit in an empty seating area designated with an 'S'.
- 7) Weather cancellation info call after 3 p.m. day of.

☺ Not ready to come? We understand! Church is still on Facebook Live and the website from 9:30 a.m. on! ☺

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SERMONS FOR SEPTEMBER, 2020

(Available at the Sermon link on our web-site or on YouTube.)

September 6th – This 14th Sunday after Pentecost we're finally back together again. Still, we are limited due to the pandemic in a U.S.A. as divided as ever this Labor Day weekend. **Matthew 18:15-20** has our church constitution's prescription for reconciliation when a member refuses to repent. If all else fails, Jesus says, "let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" in verse 17. Shocking, until you consider how Jesus treated such as these. **"DIVIDED, WE GATHER"** is Rev. Paul's sermon.

September 13th – Disciple Evangelist **Matthew** must have loved Jesus' parables because he wrote down so many in his Gospel account. Then again he was the tax collector, aka Levi, and this parable in **18:21-35** is about forgiveness, **"BARGAINS AT THE PLEA MARKET"** as Pastor Downing titles this sermon. We all know what it's like to feel judged, in varying degrees. Still we judge others, though. Only just remember the scale of God's willingness to suspend all of your debts before you go and make your petty demands of others rather than forgive.

September 20th – **"DEAL, WHAT DEAL?"** Pastor Paul's sermon is based on this vexing parable in **Matthew 20:1-16**, where hired hands are paid the same amount no matter how many hours they put in. The generosity of the vineyard owner erupts in jealousy on the part of the ones who worked all the day long. How can we replace our constant need to feel like we have earned everything with a genuine joy for one another's gifts, which are all received under God's pure grace?

September 27th – Motives and words, versus actions and results, that's what we have in **Matthew's** Gospel **21:23-32**, another parable of Jesus. Do we seize God's reign for our own benefit and comfort or does God's reign of love seize us for the benefit of all? Rev. Downing's message is **"TAKEN & IGNORED VS. GIVEN & TREASURED"**. Lip service only goes so far. Though our vanity may cause us to make promises we cannot keep, God's Holy Spirit will give us faith, like a well of power, to do God's will.

Foundation Copy Stewardship Column September, 2020

The Apostle Paul was a most interesting character whose life almost jumps off the pages of the bible. He was converted to Christ on the road to Damascus and personified the change described in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that comes to a believer in Christ as "the old has gone, the new has come!" Even his name changed from Saul of Tarsus to Paul.

That change did not bring with it a life of ease, comfort, and pleasure. To the contrary, consider a few of the problems Paul listed in 2 Corinthians 11: Five times he was beaten with whips; he was shipwrecked three times; he spent at least 24 hours lost at sea; he listed perils of waters, robbers, his countrymen, the Gentiles, the city, the wilderness, and false brethren. And if that weren't enough, he was burdened with the care of all the churches.

As a result, the mighty Apostle Paul spent his time telling everyone he could about all of his problems so that people would feel sorry for him. Over and over, he repeated his litany as part of his solicitation for offerings. Right? Wrong! In all of his writings, he mentions these difficulties only twice.

Here's his testimony: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the 'circumstances'" (Phil.4:11). One translation uses the word "state" instead of "circumstances." The Apostle wasn't talking about New York, Michigan, or Florida when he referred to "state." Not at all. He was speaking of his condition. Whatever God sent his way, he was content. When he was hungry. When he was thirsty. When he didn't have adequate clothing. When he was beaten for the sake of the Gospel. When he was persecuted.

In light of all his problems and difficulties, how could he say that he was "content"? Several answers to that question come to mind, including this one 2 verses later (Phil 4:13) in which he described his relationship with Christ, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." In the final analysis, his ability to be content was not dependent on his circumstances or his possessions. His contentment was based on his relationship to Christ, on pleasing Christ, on uplifting Christ, on glorifying Christ, and on being strengthened by Christ.

Or to put it another way, he had learned what is really important in life, just as he had learned what is really unimportant. Have you learned that lesson? If so, you can say with Paul,

"For to me, to live is Christ..."

– **Deacon Stu**

September, 2020

St. Paul's Regular Weekly Schedule:

***Due to COVID-19, Sunday services have special protocols in place and limited seating. Go to www.StPaulsLCPJS.org for details and links.**

****Weekly Sunday a.m. inside service Facebook Live at 9:30 a.m. posted for any time thereafter.**

Go to www.facebook.com/StPaulsELCA

*****Weekly Sunday Outdoor service in Parking Lot September and October at 5 p.m. bring chair. Call church after 3 p.m. for weather cancellation.**

******To attend Zoom events: click "Join a Meeting" enter Meeting ID listed in the Calendar below.**

Go to www.zoom.us or call (646) 558-8656

*******Welcome Friends & area restaurants give out free to-go meals for the hungry, out of St. Paul's parking lot at 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday.**

September 2020 Schedule

- ♥ Protestant Campus Ministries (PCM) Board Meeting at 8 a.m. Wednesday 9/2 via Zoom.
- ♥ Men's Bible Study on Mary's Gospel then 1 Peter is at 10:30 a.m. EVERY WEDNESDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 9/2, 9, 16, 23 & 30.
- ♥ Pinecrest Alumni 7:30 p.m. Wed. 9/2 via Zoom.
- ♥ Peconic clergy Pericope Bible study 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Thursdays 9/3, 17 & 24 via Zoom.
- ♥ "St. Mark's Bread" Food Pantry THURSDAYS at Hope L.C. in Selden opens at 11 a.m. to receive donations and gives out groceries to all in need from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Thu. 9/3, 10, 17 & 24.
- ♥ Prayer Group is at 10:30 a.m. EVERY FRIDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) 9/4, 11, 18 & 25. Contact Pastor Paul or Deacon Gale to add or remove names from the Prayer Lists.
- ♥ Memorial service for Yan Yiu Wah & Sau Mei at Washington Memorial Park 12 noon Friday 9/4.
- ♥ Time after Pentecost services EVERY SUNDAY Facebook Live with Communion in-person in the sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. and in the Parking Lot at 5 p.m. on 9/6, 13, 20 & 27 (see rules on page 3).
- ♥ Mary Martha Bible Study on Judges is at 10:30 a.m. 2nd & 4th TUESDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952) 9/8 & 9/22.
- ♥ St. Paul's "Liquored up Lutherans" Social Time is at 7:30 p.m. 2nd & 4th WEDNESDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 914-0960-9098) 9/9 & 9/23.
- ♥ Peconic Conference clergy monthly meeting at 10 a.m. Thursday 9/10 via Zoom.
- ♥ Church Council Meeting 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 9/15 via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826).

October 2020 and Beyond

- ♥ Peconic Conference clergy monthly meeting at 10 a.m. Thursday 10/1 via Zoom.

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- ♥ "St. Mark's Bread" Food Pantry THURSDAYS at Hope L.C. in Selden opens at 11 a.m. to receive donations and gives out groceries to all in need from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Thu. 10/1, 8, 15, 22 & 29.
- ♥ Prayer Group is at 10:30 a.m. EVERY FRIDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 800-555-016) 10/2, 9, 16, 23, & 30. Contact Pastor Paul or Deacon Gale to add or remove names from the Prayer Lists.
- ♥ Time after Pentecost services on Facebook Live with Communion in-person in the sanctuary 9:30 a.m. & in the Parking Lot 5 p.m. 10/4, 11 & 18.
- ♥ Protestant Campus Ministries (PCM) Board Meeting at 8 a.m. Wednesday 10/7 via Zoom.
- ♥ Men's Bible Study on Peter's N.T. letters is at 10:30 a.m. EVERY WEDNESDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 977-887-967) 10/7, 14, 21 & 28.
- ♥ Pinecrest Alumni 7:30 p.m. Wed. 10/7 via Zoom.
- ♥ Peconic clergy Pericope Bible study 10 a.m. to 12 noon Thursdays 10/8, 15, 22 & 29 via Zoom.
- ♥ Mary Martha Bible Study (Judges?) 10:30 a.m. Tue. 10/13 via Zoom (Meeting ID 125-248-952).
- ♥ Church Council Meeting 7:30 p.m. Tuesday 10/20 via Zoom (Meeting ID 947-1121-2826).
- ♥ St. Paul's "Liquored up Lutherans" Social Time is at 7:30 p.m. 2nd & 4th WEDNESDAY via Zoom (Meeting ID 914-0960-9098) 10/14 & 10/28.
- ♥ Reformation Sunday service on Facebook Live with Communion in-person in the sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. & in the Parking Lot at 5 p.m. 10/25.
- ♥ Filled Operation Christmas Child boxes are to be returned by Sunday 11/15 (see article page 3).



QR Code for giving to St. Paul's:

St. Paul's is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Metropolitan NY Synod. The ELCA Mission Statement: "Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world." www.elca.org & www.mnys.org

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