



January 2024



The Disciple's Connection

Resolute in the New Year



What is one of the best and worst things about a New Year? Resolutions. I try to make only 1 each year. I resolve, in the new year, to not make resolutions. I make that resolution, and I've already set myself up to succeed. The good part of a resolution? You've thought about it and determined that there is some part of you or your life in which you want to grow. A new year gives you a new chance to start that growth. The bad part of a resolution? There's a high likelihood that by February 1, that plan of growth is off track, or already left in the dust.

Don't get me wrong, thinking about you as a person or your life as a whole and wanting to grow in some area is admirable, noble. And I'm not saying all resolutions are discarded by February. I see in the whole resolution process human nature, both good and bad. Desiring to change, grow is good & healthy. But when desire meets human nature, it seems human nature wins out often. It makes us also confront a couple of biblical truths.

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out" [Romans 7:18]

"The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak" [Jesus to disciples in Gethsemane]

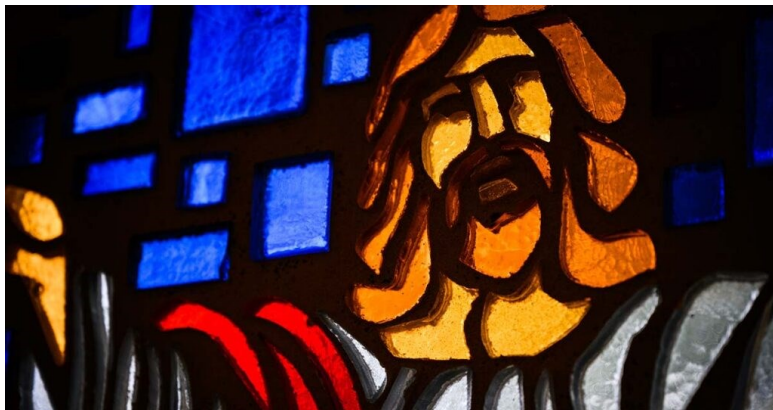
Sorry, I have no inner Tony Robbins to channel, no great words of wisdom to motivate you to action. I'm not Hans or Frans from Saturday Night Live here to pump [clap] you up. In fact, our human nature shows us that resolutions can set us up to fail. The best humans fail to be totally resolute.

That truth makes it so much sweeter to hear this: God is totally resolute. He is resolute in wanting the best for you. He does not need to make a New Year's Resolution, where He resolves to be more present in your life in 2024. He is present already. He has already given you His best present, the gift of a Savior born for you. His presence in your life won't fade away after 3-4 weeks. Where our resolve to grow, to be a better person crumbles, God's character shows Him to be steadfast, resolute.

Maybe a New Year's resolution can be to let go and let God. Want to know where to grow? Look to God, draw near to him again and let Him show you. Want to be a better person? Look to God, draw near to him again and let Him show you who He is. Let Him do in you the things you will never be to do on your own. Our flesh is most certainly weak. But God is steadfast and resolute. He wants for you and will give you what is best for you. Trust His good and gracious plans for 2024.

In Christ

Pastor Sundbom



Being Merciful to the Toxic

By David Petersen

Christ calls us to love our enemies, to act with mercy. We should not as a knee-jerk reaction insist on our rights. We yield to the weak in faith and attempt to win a brother. There is a sense, however, in which that mercy has limits. Jesus does not command that we suffer abuse and injustice passively. He does not teach that our forgiveness means we completely forget what has been done to us nor does it eliminate boundaries. Stewards guard their resources to fulfill their vocations.

Boundaries with the toxic

There are times when Christians need to set extreme boundaries for their relationships and there can even be times to separate from others. Jesus instructs us to separate from those who refuse to hear godly rebuke from the church and amend their ways (Matt. 18:17). They aren't to be indulged forever. Jesus commands us to leave those who won't hear His Word (Matt. 10:14), to be shrewd as serpents in the world (Matt. 10:16) and even not to love father and mother above Him (Matt. 10:37). In a similar way, St. Paul warns Timothy that some wicked people might claim to be learning, but if they never come to any actual knowledge and continue in their wickedness, they are liars who resist the truth. Timothy is to have nothing to do with them (2 Tim. 3:2–9).

Those are extreme situations. We pray that they are rare. We do not jump to extreme reactions or label people as toxic too quickly. At the same time, we should not pretend as though these things never happen. The world is wicked. We must be careful of the company that we keep. Solomon teaches us that "whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20). St. Paul also scolds the Corinthians for letting themselves continually be abused by false teachers and sectarians. He writes: "For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that" (2 Cor. 11:19–21).

***We do not jump to extreme reactions
or label people as toxic too quickly.***

All this is context for Jesus' command that we turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:38–40). That statement is a figure of speech called a hyperbole. A hyperbole is an exaggerated statement used to make a point in a dramatic way. If we don't recognize this, we might find ourselves cutting off body parts (Matt. 5:29) or not call-

BEING MERCIFUL TO THE TOXIC *continued*

ing our biological fathers “Dad” (Matt. 23:9) or, when it comes to dealing with chronic abusers, thinking that Jesus demands we let them walk all over us. It is, of course, possible that we will be handed over to the magistrates and others who will abuse and kill us because of the name of Christ, but that is not what Jesus is talking about with His command to turn the other cheek.

In Matthew 5, Jesus is talking primarily to His children. He is telling them how they are to get along with one another. Our fallen nature's desire for vengeance must be curbed by mercy. We should not jump to our rights or seek vengeance. We should seek to reconcile and to win over our enemies with gentleness. In this, Jesus' teaching is not much different than the godly admonition of parents to their children not to tattle. If my sister bumps into me in the hall on the way to the bathroom and bruises my shoulder, my passions might immediately rise and demand vengeance. But if I hold them in check and attempt to put the best construction on her actions, I might discover that it was an accident. Even if she acted with malice, by refusing to retaliate and “turning the other cheek,” the situation might be defused. My kind words could well lead to her repentance.

Escaping violence

At the same time, if my gentleness is met with violence, I should seek to escape it. I should not strike back as a private citizen, but I should take action to protect myself and report it to the proper authorities. Such reporting is not tattling nor is it driven by desire for vengeance. Rather, it is driven by a desire for safety. If my sister does this to me, she is likely to do it to others and I should not enable it. St. Paul teaches us that this is one of the chief purposes of earthly authorities.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

(Rom. 13:3–4)

As Luther teaches in the Large Catechism, if you do not fear God, fear at least the hangman (LC I 135).

If true repentance will not come and earthly authorities are no help, then, in love, set boundaries and limits for interaction with abusers. You should do this not simply for the sake of your own health, that you might carry out your vocation and serve your neighbor, but also for the good of the abuser. Doing so not only limits his ability to abuse, which is good for him, but can also teach him about healthy interaction and self-control.

The Bible doesn't give advice about how to set boundaries, but the concept fits with a biblical worldview that recognizes how truly evil the world is, with biblical ethics and with a Lutheran understanding of vocation. While this is not from a Lutheran perspective, I have found the article “[How Setting Boundaries Can Save Your Relationship](https://witness.lcms.org/2023/how-setting-boundaries-can-save-your-relationship)” from Tacoma Christian Counseling to be helpful in thinking about and setting up boundaries with friends and family while staying true to God's call to mercy.



Life Quotes for January

January 7 "What is it that is essential for your life this New Year? What gifts do you cherish? Certainly, Jesus is the most precious gift we have! Let Him shine through your whole life this year. Take Him with you everywhere. Remember whose family you belong to! Cling to Jesus, our Father's Son this New Year! Our Father goes with you and promises His blessings, now and forever!" *Rev. Darren Green, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

January 14 "Abortion has only ever represented a symptom. The sickness has always consisted of the deeper reality of sin. So, law never embodied the finish line or the prize. Our Savior's victory invites us to settle for nothing less than sharing life, abundant and everlasting, with each human being and receiving them all as gift and privilege. Let's press ahead with renewed enthusiasm!" *Pastor Michael Salemink, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

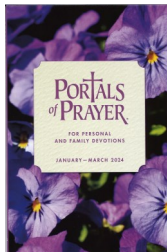
January 21 "As Christians, each one of us should be deeply steeped in God's Word. That is where the truth lies. We don't want to be 'right' for our own sake so we can boast in our 'right-ness.' We should want to be 'right' because God is revealing His truth to us, and we have been aligned with His truth. As we labor together in the life arena, let each one of us be so grounded in God's Word that we recognize God's truth and speak it in love." *Barbara Lane Geistfeld, DVM, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

January 28 "The Holy Spirit teaches us and enables us to be more effective with our body language, to hold the hands of those who are afraid of walking alone, to hug the ones who are falling apart for whatever reason, to lift those who sinned against God and against their brothers. We do all this by sharing the forgiveness that is found in Christ." *Rev. Dr. Hector Hoppe, guest speaker on "The Lutheran Hour" – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

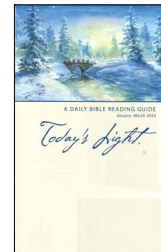
Announcements

January-March 2024

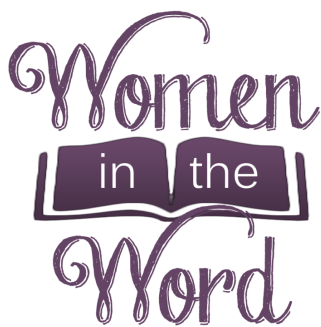
Portals of Prayer Now Available



The January-March Portals of Prayer daily devotions and Today's Light daily Bible reading guide are now available. Copies can be found on the table at the back of the sanctuary, or on the resource area table.



Women's Bible Study Continues in 2024



You are encouraged to be a part of the women's Bible study group which meets at the church 6:30-8:00 on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month (not during Lent). Mark these dates on your calendar:

- January 10 & 24
- April 10 & 24
- February 7
- May 8 & 22

All studies come from the LWML Quarterly. We hope to see you there!

Happy New Year from the Board of Outreach!

Where it is nice to look back on the accomplishments of 2023, I'm more excited about our future outreach opportunities. Two of our most well attended events last year were the Free Hot Dog Lunch in early August and the Trunk-or-Treat in October. This year we are looking for exciting ways to expand on these and other events. In 2024 our goal is to increase our support for St. Paul's Preschool as it is currently our most important outreach mission. Weekly bulletin announcements will have detailed information on event dates and times as well as volunteer opportunities. The purpose of Outreach is to aid the congregation in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ within our congregation, within our community, and beyond. Continue to pray for guidance from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we begin our work for the new year!

In His service,

Ken Chaffe, Outreach Chair





Cookie Thank You!!

Thank you to everyone who participated in baking cookies for the Lake County Sheriff's office and our three Township Fire Department locations! Each location received several dozen cookies, a Christmas card from the church and information about our Hearts of Mercy and Smile Makers toys.

2024 Altar Flower Chart

A new year and a new flower chart is a great way to remember a special occasion or person. The 2024 Altar Flower Chart has been posted on the double doors at the back of the Sanctuary. Just sign up next to the appropriate weekend. Clearly print the occasion being remembered, who the flowers are for and who they're from. Altar flowers are \$40.00. Please place the monies in an envelope labeled "Altar Flowers" with the date of the weekend and put it in the collection plate.



The Friendship Circle is the LWML (Lutheran Women's Missionary League) group for St. Paul's. We are **Women in Mission**. All women of St. Paul's are considered mem-

bers of the LWML. Here is a brief summary of mission-minded activities for 2023:

- ✝ We met for Bible Study on a regular basis
- ✝ We prepared a meal for Project Hope
- ✝ We held a servant event at which Spanish Bibles were notated with God's plan of Salvation. These Bibles were given to Spanish speaking parents at Our Shepherd
- ✝ We attended three Northeast Zone events: Prayer Service, Spring Rally and Fall Retreat
- ✝ We collected items for The Ronald McDonald House of Cleveland (Spring Rally ingathering) and for SubZero (The fall retreat ingathering)
- ✝ Kelly Hines attended the LWML Convention in Milwaukee as a Young Woman Representative for Ohio. Billie Lelle attended the convention as a guest.
- ✝ Kelly Hines, Kathy Herder and Billie Lelle presented a mite skit on LWML Weekend.
- ✝ We had a fun time making cute block snowmen as a craft activity led by Diane Wayner
- ✝ We made and served food at two funerals (Marlyss Sekki and Norm Salminen)
- ✝ \$3,243.14 in mites was collected and sent to the LWML Ohio District.
- ✝ Members who serve in various Northeast Zone and LWML Ohio District positions are: Starshine Graziadei (Ohio District Edition – ODE – editor); Kelly Hines (Northeast Zone Public Relations Chairman – Nor'Easter editor); Erin Cardina (Northeast Zone Retreat Committee); Billie Lelle (Northeast Zone President, Northeast Zone Retreat Committee and lwml ohio.org webmaster)

We praise God for His many blessings during the past year and we look forward to 2024 as we continue to "Serve the Lord with Gladness".



December Meeting Notes

- 1) Pastor's Report: Pastor reported making 9 calls, 2 shut-in visits, and performed 1 funeral. He also will take vacation to Minnesota Dec 26-Jan 3 (Jack Lelle will lead services Dec 30/31) and will travel to Michigan Jan 6/7 (Pastor Moyer will lead services). Christmas Eve services will be at 5 & 7:30 pm with communion.
- 2) President's Report: Dennis reported new copier was installed Nov 30 and all computers were configured to it, and that old machines were removed. Cost was \$11,572.85. Russ said we didn't need to borrow from the Endowment Fund with our healthy balance, and that we will see a lower operating cost. He also said we continue to have issues with our security monitoring.
- 3) Vice President's Report: Eric said he will have Julie sign new janitor contract.
- 4) Treasurer's Report: Russ reported our cash position has improved \$33,814 over last year; offerings have increased \$5,099 and total income \$10,999 the first 5 months vs. 2022 and expenses were up \$2,103 with a net gain of \$8,895 vs. last year.
- 5) Education Report: Erin reported Sunday school and Adult Bible study attendance is steady, Christmas cards are being made for UH staff, Adopt-a-Family items being collected (thanks to Star for organizing), and Advent Bible study being offered Tuesday evenings @ 6:30pm.
- 6) Preschool report: Star reported most sections of NLSA requirements completed and an action plan will address unmet items. Next meeting Dec 11.
- 7) Elders' Report: Dale reported that Elders reviewing list of delinquent members.
- 8) Stewardship Report: Kristi reported clothing items are being collected thru Jan 7.
- 9) Financial Secretary Report: Jenn said she has posted 2024 Counter sheet.
- 10) Outreach Report: Ken reported ValPak ad to Painesville/Fairport area is in the mail and number of visits to website will be monitored. Home baked cookies will be delivered to local Fire Depts. and LC Sheriff Dept. Saturday, Dec 9 with a Christmas card from St. Paul's. He also thanked Star for taking over the printing of new flyers and improving Visitor Gift bags, and that he will post weekly sermons on the website, and hopes to find ways to get Preschool families and church more engaged.
- 11) Building & Grounds Report: Craig reported making repairs to parsonage furnace, hot water tank, and 2nd bathroom shower; security lights in Preschool bathrooms and 2 smoke detectors in attic have been purchased and will be installed soon, and windows in classrooms, office, and nursery have been modified for easy exit, if needed. Repairs have been made to refrigerator (for now). Electrical outlets in parsonage kitchen still needs to be addressed.
- 12) Contribution Secretary Report: Billie reported contributions for November were \$20,051.90 including Thanksgiving Eve vs. \$12,316.75 in 2022. Number of contributors averaged 29 vs. 24 last year. She also put out 2024 envelopes for pickup in narthex.

DECEMBER COUNCIL NOTES continued**OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1) LWML Grant application has been submitted. Billie said it will be decided in February if it was accepted, and if so, vote for approval will be at June's convention.
- 2) Church Council Manual review will be completed in January.
- 3) Safety & Security Team: Dennis and Eric reported on ongoing progress: ways to improve communication to members in case of emergency via Constant Contact email, phone calls; need to improve security passwords; reviewing Preschool procedures; formulating shutdown letter; assessing risk areas; posting flip charts for specific situations; looking at security sashes and security cameras.
- 4) Alarm System still having false trips. May have to see if rewiring of lines is necessary.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1) Posting of 2024-25 Council positions up for may election with job description: Eric will post list of positions and job descriptions.
- 2) New payroll provider: ADP will be contacted for an estimate- cost possibly about \$1500.
- 3) Transferring inactive funds to general fund. Russ had requested transferring long- inactive funds to general fund. It was discussed at Semi-Annual meeting and sent back to Council for consideration and discussion. A motion was made to transfer Library Fund and Misc. Donations to general fund. Motion passed. A motion was made to combine Youth Gathering Fund and Youth Trips Fund into one Youth Fund. Motion passed.
- 4) Christmas Eve services Sunday, Dec 24 @ 5 & 7:30 pm with communion.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, Jan 3, 2024 @ 6:30pm.



From the Preschool

2024-2025 Preschool Registration

PRESCHOOL



Registration

It's that time of year again. St. Paul's Preschool will be planning the 2024-2025 school year. We will begin registering students in February and new brochures will be available soon.

As we start our planning we will be looking for assistant teachers for the fall. If you or someone you know may be interested in being a part of our program please contact Amy Marizek in the Preschool Office (440)354-3000.

January Birthdays

Star Graziadei	Jan 2	Lauren Michalak	Jan 22
Kevin Kiel	Jan 3	Connie Concoby	Jan 24
Marisa Szoradi	Jan 7	Nathan Lelle	Jan 25
Julie Greig	Jan 17	Izzabelle Sobotka	Jan 26
Annikki Tompkins	Jan 18	Matthew Chaffe	Jan 28
Valarie Sullivan	Jan 21	Lia Graziadei	Jan 28
Terry Wakelee	Jan 21	Sue Snodgrass	Jan 29
Bernie Michalak	Jan 22	MacKenzi Dewit	Jan 30



January Anniversaries



Dennis and Connie Concoby 48 years on Jan 17

December

Baptisms, Weddings, New Members, Funerals

Baptisms

None

New Members

None

Weddings

None

Funerals

None



Those Who Serve: January 2024

ELDERS:

6:00 P Saturday Dale Kerver
9:30 A Sunday Craig McConnell

COUNTERS:

Tom Cardina

LECTORS:

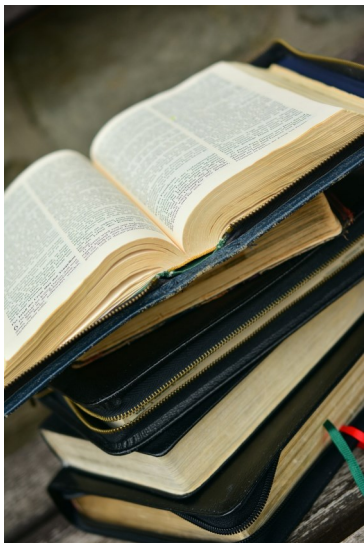
01-06-24	6:00 P	Saturday	Dave Murphy
01-07-24	9:30 A	Sunday	Jack Lelle
01-13-24	6:00 P	Saturday	Dale Kerver
01-14-24	9:30 A	Sunday	Ken Chaffe
01-20-24	6:00 P	Saturday	Pastor Sundbom
01-21-24	9:30 A	Sunday	Jenn Drake
01-27-24	6:00 P	Saturday	Dave Murphy
01-28-24	9:30 A	Sunday	Eric West

GREETERS:

6:00 P Saturday
9:30 A Sunday

SIGN UP IN JANUARY TO GREET
YOUR FELLOW DISCIPLES.

Sign-up sheet located on the dou-
ble doors at the back of the
Sanctuary.



Scripture Readings for January

January 6/7

Isaiah 60:1-6
Philippians 3:7-14
Matthew 2:1-12

January 13/14

1 Samuel 3:1-20
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 20/21

Jonah 3:1-5, 10
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 27/28

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28



January Word Search—Winter Words



DRIFTING
 HOT CHOCOLATE
 SCARF
 BOOTS
 SNOWSHOES
 COAT
 ICICLES
 BLIZZARD
 MITTENS
 SLEDDING
 COLD
 HAT
 SNOWFLAKES
 SNOWBOARDING
 BLANKETS
 FROST
 SNOWMAN
 SKIING
 WINDY

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/6463316/>

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St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Preschool

250 Bowhall Road Painesville, OH 44077

(440)354-3000 | www.splcpainesville.org | office@splcpainesville.org

Staff

Paul D. Sundbom, Pastor
 Matt Chaffe, Organist
 Peggy McDonnell, Admin Assistant

Worship Services

Saturday 6:00 pm
 Sunday 9:30 am

Sunday Bible Study

Adult 8:30am & 10:45 am
 Children 10:45 am

St. Paul's Preschool

Amy Marizek, Director
preschool@splcpainesville.org
www.stpaulspainesville.com

Also Supporting



St. Paul's Preschool



January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>Office Hours Monday-Friday 9:00am-12:00pm</div> <div>Bulletin Announcements Due Wednesdays</div>	1  Office Closed NHL Winter Classic Rose Bowl	2	3 Preschool Classes Resume Pastor Returns from Vacation 6:30 pm Council Meeting	4 National Spaghetti Day	5	6  EPIPHANY
7	8 6:30 pm Preschool Board	9 Preschool Chapel	10 6:30 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00pm Elder's Meeting	11	12	13 Undecorate Church 
14 	15  Church Office Closed No Preschool	16 Preschool No School Teacher's In-Service	17 6:30 pm Safety Committee	18 Winnie the Pooh Day	19 National Popcorn Day	20
21 National Hug Day	22 6:00 Preschool Bd	23 National Pie Day	24 6:30 pm Women's Bible Study	25	26	27 
28 	29	30	31 National Hot Chocolate Day	<div>  COMMUNION SERVICE </div> <div> WORSHIP SCHEDULE Saturdays - 6:00pm Sundays - 9:30am Sunday School - 10:45am Adult Bible Study—8:30am & 10:45am </div> <div> January Birthstone Garnet </div> <div> January Flower Carnation </div>		