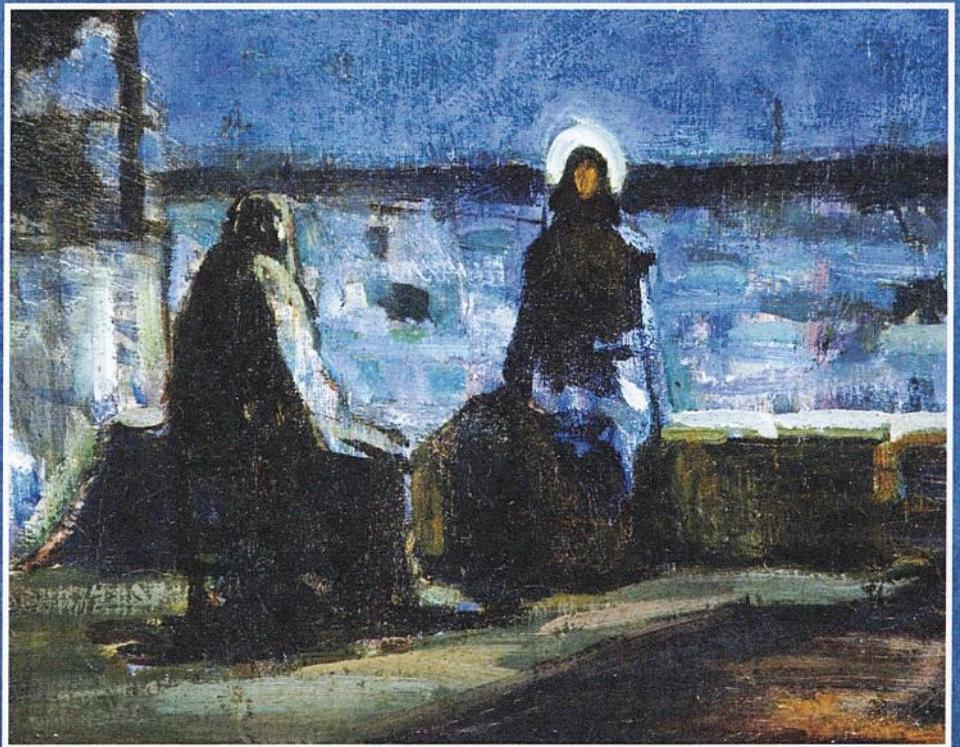


NICODEMUS came
to
Jesus
BY NIGHT



JOHN 3:2

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

www.stpaulsyork.org

Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com

Facebook: St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George

YouTube: St. Paul's Lutheran Church - South George St. York

WELCOME Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 190 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Offerings Offerings are received during the liturgy. They are presented along with gifts of bread and wine at the altar. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org or use the QR Code provided.

Restrooms are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex (George St). Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms as well as in the nursery which is accessed through the double doors front right.

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Parents are asked to stay with their children. Quiet activities are also available in the Narthex for infant through preschool children to use with an adult.

An AED/Defibrillator unit is located in the Good Shepherd room. It is placed on the wall left side of the Springettsbury door exit.

Parents, please accompany your child to the restroom during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.



Lutheran Church in York, PA - St. Paul's Lutheran...

stpaulsyork.org



Saturday evening remember to turn your clocks ahead 1 hour!

STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Youth Director	Kelly Moore-Spencer	kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Children's Music Director	Julianna Jones	Jjones.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	tweikert.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com

March 1, 2026
The Second Sunday in Lent
Holy Communion 8:30 and 10:30 AM

PRELUDE

Lord Jesus, Think on Me

J. Bert Carlson

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

APOSTOLIC GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE *sung 3 times*

Lord. have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord. have mer - cy; have mer - cy, O Lord.

Stand

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. . . Heavenly Father, it is your glory always to have mercy. Bring back all who have erred and strayed from your ways; lead them again to embrace in faith the truth of your Word and to hold it fast; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Genesis 12:1-4a

(back cover)

PSALM: Psalm 121

spoken antiphonally pulpit side -odd verses/font side-even verses

- ¹ I lift up my eyes | to the hills;*
from where is my | help to come?
- ² My help comes | from the LORD,*
the maker of heav- | en and earth.
- ³ He will not let your | foot be moved*
and he who watches over you will not | fall asleep.
- ⁴ Behold, he who keeps watch | over Israel*
shall neither slum- | ber nor sleep;
- ⁵ the LORD himself watches | over you;*
the LORD is your shade at | your right hand,
- ⁶ so that the sun shall not strike | you by day,*
nor the | moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD shall preserve you | from all evil;*
it is he who shall | keep you safe.
- ⁸ The LORD shall watch over your going out and your | coming in,*
from this time forth for- | evermore.

SECOND READING

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 (*back cover*)

Stand

VERSE



Let your stead - fast love come to us, O Lord.
 Save us as you prom-ised; we will trust your word.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 3:1-17 (*back cover*)

The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

Pastor Reep

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

God Loved the World (ELW 323)



1 God loved the world so that he gave his on - ly
 2 Christ Je - sus is the ground of faith, who was made
 3 If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your
 4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son for - gives all
 5 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly



Son the lost to save, that all who would in
 flesh and suf - fered death; all who con - fide in
 trou - bled heart can cheer: Christ Je - sus res - cues
 sins that you have done, and jus - ti - fied by
 Spir - it, Three in One! To you, O bless - ed



him be - lieve should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.
 Christ a - lone are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.
 us from death; that is the firm - est ground of faith.
 Je - sus' blood, your bap - tism grants the high - est good.
 Trin - i - ty, be praise now and e - ter - nal - ly!

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**
**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.**
Through him all things were made.
**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin
Mary, and was made man.**
**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**
**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**
**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**
**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

A brief silence.

Eternal Father, you renew us by grace. Continue to inspire faith through the work of church artists and hymnwriters. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Preserve the earth, and protect conservationists, scientists, and all who labor for the good of creation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Open the hearts of all leaders to seek the flourishing of every person and lend your help to all who wait for justice, deliverance, and peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Declare your word of grace to any who are wrongfully condemned and lift up any brought low by hatred and exclusion. Tend to all who are struggling with illness or loss (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Bless newcomers and new members in this assembly (*especially*) and accompany those who have recently left this community to journey elsewhere (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You are our keeper in life and in death. Thank you for our beloved who have died, and for your promise which saves this whole world by your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The ministers and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS

8:00 AM Organ

O Perfect Life of Love

Kevin Hildebrand

10:30 AM Chancel Choir

God So Loved the World

John Stainer

OFFERTORY

Return to the Lord (LBW setting II)



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Stand

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray....Blessed are you,

O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING

You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God.
You are most holy, and great is the majesty of your glory.
You so loved the world that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

We give you thanks for his coming into the world to fulfill for us your holy will
and to accomplish all things for our salvation.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's
death until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Remembering, therefore, his salutary command, his life-giving passion and death, his
glorious resurrection and ascension, and the promise of his coming again,
we give thanks to you, O Lord God Almighty, not as we ought but as we are
able; we ask you mercifully to accept our praise and thanksgiving and with your
Word and Holy Spirit to bless us, your servants, and these your own gifts of
bread and wine, so that we and all who share in the body and blood of Christ
may be filled with heavenly blessing and grace, and, receiving the forgiveness of
sin, may be formed to live as your holy people and be given our inheritance with
all your saints.

To you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory in your holy
church, now and forever.

Amen.

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

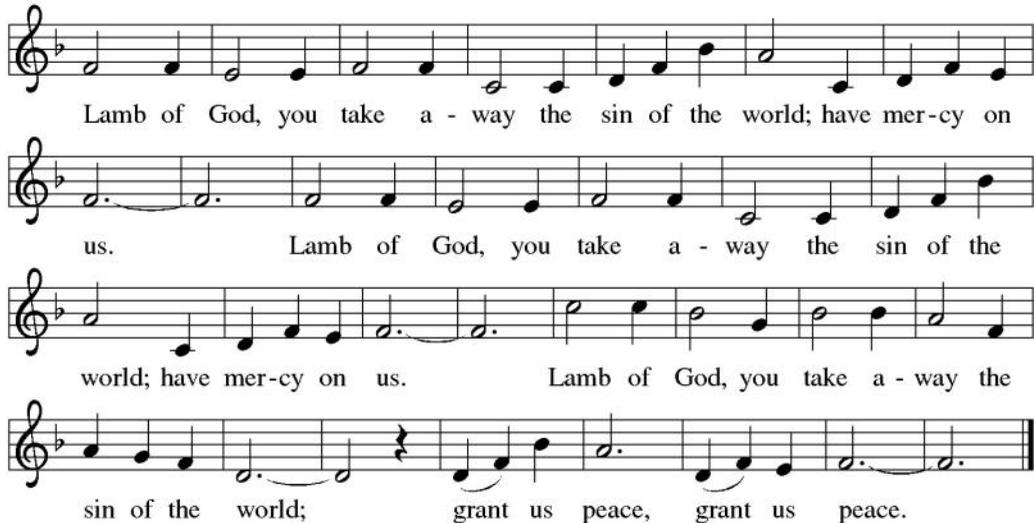
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

FRACTION *A brief silence is kept.*

AGNUS DEI



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Sit

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

Our Communion is “open” to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

Procedure for receiving Communion:

1. *Come to communion using the center aisle.*
2. *Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.*
3. *Take your place along the chancel step.*
4. *The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.*
5. *Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.*
6. *Return to your pew using the side aisle*

COMMUNION HYMN 10:30 AM *Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart (ELW 750)*



- 1 Lord, thee I love with all my heart; I pray thee, ne'er from me de-part;
- 2 Yea, Lord, thine own rich boun-ty gave my bod - y, soul, and all I have
- 3 Lord, let at last thine an-gels come, to A-br'ham's bos-om bear me home.

Continued on next page...



with ten-der mer-cy cheer me. Earth has no plea-sure I would share,
in this poor life of la - bor. Lord, grant that I in ev - 'ry place
that I may die un-fear - ing; and in its nar - row cham-ber keep



yea, heav'n it-self were void and bare if thou, Lord, were not near me.
may glo - ri - fy thy lav - ish grace and serve and help my neigh - bor.
my hod - y safe in peace-ful sleep un - til thy re - ap - pear - ing.



And should my heart for sor-row break, my trust in thee can noth-ing shake.
Let no false teach-ing me be-guile, let Sa - tan not my soul de - file.
And then from death a-wak-en me, that these mine eyes with joy may see,



Thou art the por - tion I have sought; thy pre - cious
Give strength and pa - tience un - to me to bear my
O Son of God, thy glo - rious face, my Sav - ior



blood my soul has bought. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and Lord,
cross and fol - low thee. Lord Je - sus Christ, my God and Lord,
and my fount of grace. Lord Je - sus Christ, my prayer at - tend,



my God and Lord, for - sake me not! I trust thy word.
my God and Lord, in death thy com - fort still af - ford.
my prayer at - tend, and I will praise thee with - out end!

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been ful -



filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre-pared in the



sight of ev - ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the na - tions



and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Now, Lord, you let your ser - vant go in peace.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

My Song is Love Unknown

Dale Wood

St. Paul's Food Pantry Needs: Peanut Butter, Cereal, plastic and paper shopping bags, and monetary donations. Monetary donations can be placed in a special envelope marked "Pantry". Contact Teresa Rohrbaugh to volunteer for Tuesday distribution days. Contact Patty Snyder to volunteer for Thursday delivery days or Sunday stocking days or contact the church office. Thank you to all who help!

Becoming the Neighbors the World Needs—Sunday 9:30 AM Christ Hall

This new curriculum was prepared for Bridge of Hope. Co-author, Rev. William Snyder will be introducing two stories from the biblical witness which were selected to foster greater neighborhood involvement, understanding, and active participation working to end homelessness. The stories highlighted over the 5 Sundays in Lent are based on Luke 10:25-37 (the Good Samaritan) and four chapters in the book of Ruth 1:16-18, Ruth 2:8-13, Ruth 3:9-11, and Ruth 4:13-17. These two narratives will provide a lens through which we can better understand ourselves, God, and our neighbors. We pray that together we are becoming the neighbors the world needs. Join us in Christ Hall on Sunday at 9:15 AM. beginning February 22nd.

Wednesday Mid-Week Lent

The Seven Petitions of the "Lord's Prayer"

Soup, Salad & Bread Supper, Christ Hall 6:00 PM

Vespers with Preaching, Church Nave 7:00 PM



The Wednesdays of Lent offer opportunities to strengthen Christian witness through fellowship and prayer. A simple supper of soup, bread and salad, will be held in Christ Hall at 6:00 PM. A sign-up sheet is located on the stand in the Good Shepherd Room. If you are willing to bring some of the things needed for the weekly supper simply sign up so we know that which items are covered. Additionally we need a few volunteers to help set up and clean up following the meals. We will need at least three crock pots of soup for each week. Following the supper evening Prayer, Vespers, will be held in the church nave at 7:00 PM. We will be using the service from Lutheran Book of Worship with a few modifications. We have invited the congregations of Christ York, Grace York, St. Peter's York, and Christ Manchester to join us.

The Property Committee invited the original engineer along with our local HVAC systems maintenance company to the church to explore ways to reduce our energy consumption. Our system has been recalibrated. Note that during the heating cycle temperature throughout the building will be 68° and during the cooling cycle 74°. Please dress accordingly. We hope that this will reduce consumption as well as lower our utility costs.



2026 Flower Chart—The 2026 flower chart is posted on the Springettsbury vestibule bulletin board. **The cost of each vase is \$40 per vase.** Simply complete the flower form, make a check payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church and mark it altar flowers, and slip it under the office window. You can also contact the office to reserve a date, and to provide all of the correct information for inclusion in the Sunday bulletin. All information for the bulletin needs to be received by Wednesday morning of the previous week. This is a great way to honor someone, celebrate a milestone in life, or remember a loved one. The flowers may be taken home with you at the conclusion of the 10:30 AM liturgy or you may have them given to someone who is sick, shut it, or hospitalized. *Please note that there are no flowers during the season of Lent.*

Experimental Trial Worship Time—Begins TODAY 1 March 2026

If there was something that you could do to increase involvement in the life of the congregation, would you do it? Would you try it? Would you give it a chance?

That was the question posed to the participants at the annual retreat held in January by committee chairpersons and congregation council members. The desire is to continue with an early worship service opportunity and one that will permit greater participation. By adjusting the Sunday schedule, from 8:00 to 8:30 AM, it is hoped that we can accomplish several things:

- Increase attendance by moving from 8:00 AM and starting at 8:30 AM. This may be appealing to families who regularly move out the door shortly after 8:00 AM during the week. This eliminates a half hour wait between Sunday worship and Sunday school. While the education time is scheduled at 9:15 AM the reality is that folks arrive at 9:30 AM. Worshipers can move directly from worship to Christian Education.
- Increase available parking for the 10:30 AM liturgy. By making the early worship time a bit more appealing for schedules this has the potential of freeing up parking spaces for those who arrive later in the morning. The 10:30 AM liturgy is often the time when we experience individuals and families visiting St. Paul's having more parking options would be beneficial. Currently 8:00 AM averages 35 and 10:30 AM averages 125.
- By evening out the participants across two service times, we increase the potential number of people available to serve. This will ease the burden currently experienced at the early service time.
- When there are 70 or more people in the church the energy in the room changes. This is most noticeable for the preaching task, both the one preaching and those who listen. The acoustics in the room change.

After significant deliberation the Council decided on **an experimental trial worship time of 8:30 AM (moving the 8:00 AM liturgy one half hour) from March 1st through May 17th**. This will provide a time to hear responses, see if we are moving toward the desired hopes, and have time to plan accordingly for the 2026-2027 academic year. **The start time of the second liturgy will remain at 10:30 AM.**

For additional information or questions regarding this decision, please contact any member of the Congregation Council.

TODAY Sunday, March 1 Harrisburg Choral Society

3:00 PM

The Harrisburg Choral Society under the direction of Kyle Zeuch and Victor Fields will present a choral concert entitled: **A Season of Reflection: Psalms in Song** featuring choral music of Palestrina, Mozart, Messiaen, Vaughn Williams and Mack Wilberg.

The Harrisburg Choral Society founded in 1895, is the oldest continuously active music ensemble in South-Central Pennsylvania. The Society has maintained its traditional role of performing major works of choral literature with professional soloists and orchestral accompaniment.

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open Mon–Thurs 8:00 AM—4:00 PM Fri 8:00 AM—11:30 AM

Sunday, March 1 NEW SERVICE HOURS

- 8:30 AM Holy Eucharist
- 9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
- 9:15 AM New Members Class—Community Rm
Lower level
- 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist —Live Stream
- 3:00 PM Harrisburg Choral Society Concert
- 6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

Monday, March 2

- 5:30 PM Women's Group

Tuesday, March 3

- 9:30 AM Pantry
- 6:00 PM Create—Preschool thru Grade
- 6:00 PM Bible Study

Wednesday, March 4

- 10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave
- 10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ hall
- 4:30 PM Lenten Watercolors with Pastor Reep
- 6:00 PM Lenten Dinner
- 7:00 PM Lenten Vespers

Thursday, March 5

- 10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave
- 6:30 PM Handbell Choir
- 7:30 PM Chancel Choir

Saturday, March 7, Turn Clocks ahead 1 hour!

Sunday, March 8

- 8:30 AM Holy Eucharist
- 9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
- 9:15 AM New Members Class—Community Rm
Lower level
- 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist —Live Stream
- 11:45 AM 2nd Sunday Sandwiches
- 6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm



**Saturday evening remember to
turn your clocks ahead 1 hour!**

Watercolor Painting Class—4 Sessions Remain—Wednesdays in Lent—4:30 – 6:00 PM

Pastor Reep will offer a watercolor class during the season of Lent. “*Lenten Watercolors*” will be held in the Youth Room on the Upper Level. Middle school students, through adults, are welcome to participate. Bring any supplies that you may have for the first session. If you don’t have supplies, we will supply things for the first week and then you may seek out supplies. The remaining Wednesdays are March 4, 11, 18 & 25.

St. Paul's Women's Retreat, April 18, 8:30 AM-4:30 PM. Come for a day of rest, a time to get away from the business of daily life, to renew old friendships and build new ones, and to deepen your relationship with God. Sign up by completing the registration form you received in the mail. Forms are also located near church exits. Contact anyone from the planning committee with questions: Janet Fitch, Julianna Jones, Kat Lemke, Patty Snyder. Or call the church office.

Promises are made at many different intervals of life, marriage, baptism, financial loans, confirmation, power of attorney, executor, friendship. There are lots of different kinds of promises but central of all of them is that you will act in good faith, toward spouse, infant, financial institution, religious community, confidant, legal system, friend. Promise. God made a promise to Abraham. That promise caused him to go; to move out, to move on, to enter unknown territory and unknown situations. But the promise wasn't any old promise, it was God's promise. *"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

It is *the promise* of which Mary would sing generations later. Mary sings about the *"low lifted up, the hungry fed, the promise made to our fathers to Abraham and his children, forever.* It is *the promise* that Jesus referenced when he witnessed the woman with infirmity who was crippled for 18 years. Jesus identified her as *a daughter of Abraham.* The onlookers saw her as rejected, cursed, vile, an outsider. Jesus looked at her with compassion and healed her. It is *the promise* that is referenced in the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus the beggar who lay by the Rich man's gate day after day. This story tricks us into thinking that the rich man is blessed, he has all the external signs that we humans value and crave, and poor old Lazarus seems to have nothing, having to beg for daily scraps. But in an unexpected turn it is Lazarus the poor old beggar who is called to be with Father Abraham, and it is *Father Abraham who blesses Lazarus.* It is *the promise* that landed an invitation for Zacchaeus, the wee little man, the tax collector and foreigner an obvious outsider, to have dinner with Jesus. Jesus announces salvation for him and his household and then references *Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham.* Promise to Abraham. Promise to the lowly. Promise to the hungry. Promise to the infirmed. Promise to the foreigner. Promise to the beggar. Promise to the tax collector. Promise to you and me.

Things are better because of God's promise. Things are changing, and as much as we dislike change, because of God's promise to Abraham, things are being made better. When God called Abraham, he accepted and embraced the call. The call came at a time when things seemed hopeless. The biblical word that sums this up is barren. In the Bible when barren is mentioned it is always stated to remind us that the future is cut off. Abraham believed the promise. And he did what God commanded. The word "go" put old Abraham on the move, not looking back but only looking ahead to the fulfillment of the promise. There wasn't any hard empirical evidence for Abraham to sift through to make the decision to go. He simply trusted God's word and went on the way that God would show him. This is called faith. To move forward without any concrete evidence, to act based only God's word of promise, this is faith. God would give the blessing, and provide for the journey, and along the way grant blessing to those with whom Abraham sojourned. God has formed, shaped an entire family, wife Sarah, nephew Lot and then later children and grandchildren, all, through Abraham embracing the call and believing the promise. Abraham went! He is the model, the chief disciple you might say, for he forsakes everything to follow God's command to go. That is the very thing the gospel write Mark thousands of years later would demand for discipleship as it related to following Christ Jesus. That is the very thing the gospel writer Matthew concludes his account of the gospel narrative with the Great Commission to "go" into

all the world! This is expected of us too. This is God's story, God's call, God's command, God's promise, precisely for us in this moment in a time when things seem hopeless, that future seems nonexistent.

We are given a promise in the Word and water of Holy Baptism. We are made children of God. We are formed, shaped, into God's family. We are given commands. "Do this." "Go make disciples" With such command and promise things change. Things are better with God's leading, directing, modeling, revealing and restoring bringing about hope. Hope made known through his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus.

In the gospel reading we encounter Nicodemus. He is curious about the kingdom of God. Nicodemus has seen signs that Jesus has done; the miracle at Cana in Galilee when water was changed to wine; the overturning of the money changer's tables in the temple. He wants to know how to *see the kingdom*. Jesus tells him he needs to be born from above, born anew, that it is with the Spirit and Word that he will grasp, recognize, make sense of the kingdom. When Jesus is sentenced to death and is lifted on Calvary's cross, maybe then God's love for the world will be evident, at least for those who believe, and go, move out in faith, move on, entering unknown territory and situations. For others it will take Easter's resurrection and physical post-resurrection appearances of our Lord to reach some who need to see to believe.

We are amid a journey that began long before any of us were given breath and life. We are part of a family of faith called St. Paul's, named after the Apostle and New Testament writer and herald of the gospel to foreign lands. Celebrating the 190th anniversary of the charter of the congregation we acknowledge those who came before us, faithful folks who trusted the promise. People who believed God. People who trusted in the Lord, Christ Jesus. The challenge is for us to go to head into the future trusting the promise of God and acting in ways that befit God's people, offering blessing to all and being a blessing for all.

We are called and given the command to go, move, and advance the congregation into the next generation pushing toward a second century of gospel ministry. We do so in faith, trusting like Abraham and Sarah that the Lord God will guide, and protect, and bless, while sojourning in and through unknown territory. And along the way we will be a blessing to those whom we encounter; some blessings come in the form of Food Pantry, Preschool experience, Adoption and Foster Care, Neighborhood meetings, relationships with college students, community music makers, scripture study, fellowship, choir rehearsals, Sunday school, the evicted and homeless, and those needing help with utilities, or someone to pray with them and for them.

Genesis chapter 12 is early in the story of God's call to Abraham. The remainder of the drama will unfold, probing the embrace of God's promise, finding out if God's promise can be honored, and assessing the cost of such a decision to go, the cost of such a decision to move out, the cost of such a decision to bless, the cost of such a decision to act in faith. It is *that promise* that brought us here today. It is that promise that opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It is the promise that grants us salvation, healing, and acceptance as we sojourn offering blessing and being a blessing. Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1-4a

The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.

Psalm 121**SECOND READING: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

GOSPEL: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

¹¹“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Next Sunday’s Readings: Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42.

Cover: *Study for Nicodemus Visiting Jesus* by Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1899. Photo by xenex. WikiArt. Public domain.

Readings from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Revised Common Lectionary copyright © 1992 by the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT), admin. Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Please visit our website at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Printed in U.S.A.

ITEM014963 ELCA-R