

## St. Paul Lutheran Church + 5103 N. Central Ave. + Tampa, FL 33603 + (813)239-3113 www.stpaultampa.org + office@stpaultampa.org

# From the Pastor

#### **Christ Opens Our Minds**

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Luke 24:45

The New Testament recounts several resurrection appearances of Jesus. No two are alike. We can't pin down what the resurrected body looks like. The Apostle Paul strains at a description. He says it is a spiritual body. That's just as challenging to understand. The risen Jesus is in a category by himself that we have nothing to compare with. Descriptions fail to satisfy our intellect; we either trust the witnesses or not.

The Judean hope in bodily resurrection first appears a few hundred years before Jesus when the Maccabees retake the Jerusalem Temple and cleanse it of foreign idols. That's when Hanukah became a celebration. At the end of the age, the sleeping dead would be bodily resurrected to receive their reward: the righteous inherit the earth and the unrighteous receive everlasting torment.

This idea of a final judgment based on ethical merit has striking resiliency. In our world it's a mixed bag of whether good gets rewarded properly. It just seems right that it should. The score will be settled in the next world. Much of the world believes something similar, karma, dharma, eternal reciprocity.

The two things that come across in the resurrection stories are shockingly different. The first is fear seizes the witnesses. Recognizing the risen Jesus standing in front of them makes them gulp hard. The gospels don't say what this fear is about. But we can guess that their desertion of him at his trial and execution played a role. Given the common belief about resurrection to eternal

torment for the wicked, that first encounter with Jesus would understandably cause shudders to run down their spines.

That's when the more stunning thing happens. Jesus pronounces forgiveness as the hallmark of resurrection. The ancient human calculus about right and wrong finally getting squared is foiled.

We have to pause to take this in. A lot of wellmeaning people have found the physical resurrection of Jesus (whatever that is) to be more than they can accept or affirm. I, for one, just leave it as the New Testament presents it, though I do like to play with the multidimensional reality of quantum physics. What is the truly shocking thing is the forgiveness of sins, as Luke puts it. I think we've domesticated this divine pronouncement to remove its scandal, reducing it to interpersonal conflict resolution and emotional equilibrium. These things don't require physical resurrection; just psychosocial transformation.

But, if we take the scriptures seriously, forgiveness is about real estate itself, forgiveness of debt and leaving land fallow for seven years, not just the emotions that go along with taking something of value from another person or someone taking from you. The rich and noble accumulated the farms of the poor. The ancient empires that destroyed Israel took the land which God had given her. Debt and bondage broke the children of Israel in half and made them subjects of foreigners. The prophets are uniformly clear that the sins of the nation brought about this judgment of dispossession. Pharisees and Sadducees and Essenes were all in their own ways trying to work their way back to a restored nation. Crucifying Jesus was expedient. He had awakened the ancient hope of Jubilee land reform, and everyone feared that hope might go wild and bring the fury of Rome to end all hopes.

So when Jesus appears to the disciples proclaiming forgiveness, they catch wind of his greater vision and become its witnesses.

What is that vision? We see it enacted in the Jerusalem church. They hold all things in common to meet everyone's needs. That has been God's intention from creation forward. The distribution of the Promised Land to the families of Israel had been to provide for everyone's needs. Jubilee is about meeting needs. Something neither the Temple nor Rome provided. Neither one inspired people to care for one another no matter where they come from.

Jesus confronts both the church and the world with his complete personal solidarity with suffering and the power of forgiveness to restore God's intention for the good life for all of us. Scrap the calculus about right and wrong. Forget about the worldly uses of power. God's not planning on leaving anybody behind.

We need our minds opened as Luke says Jesus opened the scriptures. Jesus doesn't proof text his suffering and resurrection. Instead, he provides a compelling vision of the new humanity in a renewed creation. His gift is neither partisan nor tribal. It is all inclusive. We still struggle with God's inclusive love. There is so much we want to leave out in our own versions of how things should be but God will be All in all.

I can't make sense of the resurrection on its own in isolation from the witness that it generates. In that witness, the sick are healed, the impoverished live well, widows have honored places at the table, people of all nations dwell in peaceful exchange of gifts, and creation sings its praises. Righteousness and peace kiss each other, as the psalm says. Resurrection brings a new jubilee for Jesus sits at the right hand of the Power on High.

I pray the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead might also raise our witness in the Lutheran Urban Parish of Tampa to the reality of resurrection among us even today. Whatever we have been and done, God's forgiveness can make us new. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ!

Grace and peace, Pr. Russell Meyer

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

On Saturday, March 24, a group from St. Paul joined hundreds of thousands of students and parents across the country supporting The March for Our Lives. Gathering in the parking



lot of the church and carpooling to the event we donned our newly printed T-Shirts declaring "The Lutheran Urban Parish Stands with You" and on the back "God's Work. Our Hands." The shirts are very bright and I will say they helped us find each other when we got separated. It was a great experience to show our support and I for one did not consider this to be a political statement. I don't know what the answers are, but I support standing up with students who say no more gun violence. Let us pray that this can be possible.

I am afraid that this sort of activism makes some of us uncomfortable; that representing the Parish this way maybe questionable, and I get that, but have to point out my feelings are just the opposite. I think it's our responsibility to stand up and make ourselves heard sometimes. Elie Wiesel said "Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented" and this is what we tell our children when bullied in school. Speak up, defend yourself and those unable to defend themselves. It's hard sometimes, and it's uncomfortable, but as I tell my children and now my grandchildren, it's always right to do the right thing.

John F. Kennedy said "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win, and the others, too." This is how I feel about representing ourselves. We stand with what is right, not because it is easy, but because it's hard. We stand with the homeless at The Well, offering a hand and a shoulder because it's the right thing to do. We work for Social Justice and stand up for what is right because it's hard. It would be easier to send a check, to let others do the hard work. To walk away, but that's not how we roll! Let us work hard together. It's the right thing to do.

Respectfully submitted, Tina Fritz, Council President



Marching in the Light of God: Marching with the March for Our Lives Rally in Tampa

A few weeks ago, on March 24, I joined our Pastor along with eight other members of our church, to go down to Curtis Hixon Park for the *Tampa March for Our Lives* rally. We all wore matching t-shirts with the words, *"Lutheran Urban Parish Stands With You"* on the front and *"God's Work Our Hands"* on the back. This rally was one of many around the country that was held that morning in support of stricter gun control laws, to protest senseless gun violence, and to honor the lives of the many people who have been lost in so many mass shootings.

I think there were about 13,000+ people in the crowd there that day. We all stood together and a few of us spoke with some of the younger people that were standing near us. They were teenagers from local high schools and they all had signs in their hands with various statements that were in protest of gun violence. As I stood next to these young adults and watched so many of them in the crowd, I began to wonder what it must be like to be a young person today living in a world where there are some individuals who believe that school safety means arming teachers, having more police presence on campus, or even more "safety" drills to practice for a possible school shooting. I wondered what it must be like to not just be able to see school as a place to be educated. Talking to these young people, I realized that all of them were wise beyond their years and I wondered about the impact these recent events may have had on their faith. Not just in God, but in humanity.

And then I remembered a South African protest hymn we have sung at our church, *We Are Marching in the Light of God* or *Siyahamba* in Zulu, the original language this hymn was written in back in 1952. In 1978, a Swedish choral group, Fyedur, was touring South Africa by invitation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa. Their musical director, Anders Nyberg, heard the hymn and he adapted and published it in a songbook entitled Freedom is Coming: Songs of Protest and Praise from South Africa. The English Lyrics are: basically repeating We Are Marching in the Light of God several times and then singing alternative lyrics replacing the word marching with other words like, dancing, singing, living, and praying,

It hit me while I was there in the crowd that morning that, whether they realized it all or not, all of us were Marching in the Light of God and our march was a prayer, a prayer of hope, a prayer of grace, a prayer of justice and a prayer of peace. While it is true that this march was a protest against gun violence, for me it was also a prayer for our shared humanity. As I stood in the crowd I realized that a march against violence was actually a march for the peace that our Lord and Savior Jesus spoke about in John 14:27 when He said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled." I have hope that the peace that Christ will be realized in all of our hearts. We will not be troubled but filled with His unending compassion. I pray that, as a nation, we come together and we elect morally-just leaders to office who put public safety first over politics. This IS what I believe Jesus calls us all to do!

Yes, there is much in this world that troubles us all, but that morning I marched with over 13,000 people (and even more joined us all over the world) and for a few hours we stood united and committed to peace, His peace! On that day we marched and stood together doing *God's Work With Our Hands* (and feet), *Marching in the Light of God* against violence and for peace. My heart was not troubled; it was inspired because we went in peace and served the Lord! Thanks be to God!

Jeanine Romano, PhD Parish Deacon, Tampa Urban Parish



#### FROM THE PARISH DEACON

# PARISH ASSOCIATE





"Shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we are capable of change."

#### **Greetings in Christ Jesus!**

I would like to invite you to a new study group that meets every Thursday at 6:30pm in the Lounge at St Paul. Meditation seems to enjoy some popularity today. Modern science has begun to better understand the benefits of mindfulness for reducing stress and finding greater peace and balance in one's life. Yet meditation comes in many forms, from the more physical styles of yoga and tai chi, to the sitting meditations of Buddhism. Every week, we have meditation in the sanctuary at St Paul at noon. Our practice is in the Christian tradition of *lectio* divina, as adapted by Luther and later Lutherans. If you'd like to learn more about meditation and its benefits, I'd like to invite you to join us for a new study group called Introduction to Meditation: Buddhist and Christian Perspectives. I have asked a longtime friend of mine, Justin Carpenter, to participate and offer some of his own knowledge and experiences as a Christian and lifetime practitioner of Buddhism. In this group, I hope that we will have an opportunity to do some interfaith dialogue and learn more about the insights the Buddhist tradition offers, as well as to learn about those aspects of our own tradition with which we may be unfamiliar. I hope to see you there!

Peace,

Gabriel Morgan

#### New Sunday School Study

What makes us worthy? What gives us our sense of identity and self-worth? Is it our job, education, talent, house, what we buy, our relationships, or something else? Have you ever been in a situation that made you feel unworthy, inadequate, or less than? For example, have you ever been in a situation where someone put you down and it made you feel like time seemed to slow down, your heart raced, your mouth got dry, and you were looking down or even having tunnel vision?

According to Dr. Brené Brown, this experience is called "shame." Dr. Brown defines "shame" as the feeling a person has when they feel like they are bad or unworthy. We all experience shame at times in our lives, but we may experience shame for different reasons. The world has all kinds of standards for worthiness. Sometimes we may achieve the successes the world tells us we must in order to feel worthy, and then we are puffed up with a sense of pride and superiority over others. Or we may experience these standards as oppressive, like we never measure up, and are always under the judgmental eye of family and friends.

What does God's Word have to say about all of this? I invite you to join a new study for Sunday School on Sunday mornings at 9:15am. For the next several weeks, we will explore the dynamics of shame, the differences between God's standards of worthiness and the world's, and the good news of Jesus Christ, who gives us his own worthiness freely on account of his life, death, and resurrection.

Peace be with you, Gabriel Morgan

# PUB THEOLOGY

**PUB THEOLOGY:** Greetings family and friends of the Lutheran Urban Parish of Tampa! Martin Luther often invited friends and guests to his home to enjoy food and a good beer, and the conversations around the table were often so engaging that his students recorded them. Does that sound like fun? Well if you are ready to relax, have a pint, and speak easy about the big topics, then come join us for **Pub Theology on Fridays, at 6:30 pm in the Luther Tower**, which is located on the campus of St Paul, toward the back left corner of the parking lot. We will meet weekly, invite a friend; all are welcome! Please note that this event is BYOB.

### MUSIC MINISTRY

Day of arising, Christ on the roadway, unknown companion walks with his own. When they invite him, as fades the first day, and bread is broken, Christ is made known. Lo, I am with you, Jesus has spoken. This is Christ's promise, this is Christ's sign: when the church gathers, when bread is broken, there Christ is with us in bread and wine. Christ, our companion, hope for the journey, bread of compassion, open our eyes. Grant us your vision, set all hearts burning, that all creation with you may rise. (ELW 374 stanzas 1, 3, & 4)

This lovely hymn is found in the Easter section of our hymnal. The Emmaus story in Luke is freshly told in this text written by Susan Palo Cherwien and is paired with a tune written by Carl Shalk, both well-known and well respected Lutheran hymnists. Look at the text carefully, and see the hope that we all have from the resurrected Christ.

Many thanks to our musicians for sharing their time and talents with us on a regular basis: Ann Delach, Gabriel Morgan, Hilde Reno, Dave Stroupe, Jeanine Romano, and Michael Brannan (cantors); all of our choir members, for all of their time in late rehearsals during Lent; and Greg Cannella, who inspired us on Easter Sunday playing the trumpet.

Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone be the glory),

Dennis



# WORSHIP/ALTAR GUILD



Our annual Easter breakfast celebration on April 1 at 9:30am was well attended and enjoyed by all who came. It was followed with an Easter Egg Hunt and our Easter Service at 10:30am.

A special thanks to ALL who made this a success!!

Dr. Gabriel Morgan will be recognized as our parish associate during our worship service. Date to be announced within the next month. Gabriel will be serving the parish mission in both congregations.

#### ALTAR GUILD

I need help!! A few weeks ago the altar candles were damaged due to lack of oil. If you are lighting the altar candles for any reason please make sure they are filled with oil to about half an inch from the top. The oil is in the upper left cabinets in the Sacristy. Thank you!!

Patty Tolzman, Chairperson Worship/Altar Guild



Dr. Gabriel Morgan along with Peggy Reineking, will lead three of our parish youth from Faith Lutheran: Kyron Defreitas, Ahbasi Lattin, and Akimio Pickering, to the triennial youth gathering in Houston June 27-June 31. All registration money must be submitted by May 15. Your special offering for them makes a difference in reaching our \$6000 goal.

The Gathering seeks to open up pathways for attendees to discover someone to become, somewhere to belong and something to do. God has fierce love for them, just as they are, and by grace, through faith, they have been saved. Experiencing and claiming this reality, indeed changes everything!

Thank you for your support! WRITE YOUTH GATHERING ON YOUR CHECK MEMO LINE!

# **REBECCA CIRCLE**

The ladies of Rebecca Circle are busy planning the end-of-the-year dinner to be held in May. This will be the last meeting before we break for the Summer and will include planning activities for the next program year. All ladies of the church are invited. More details to follow as we have them.

Last quarter, Rebecca Circle sponsored the creation of the brick pathway in front of the church. In addition to providing additional visibility for the church to drivers and pedestrians passing by, the pathway is used by wedding parties using limousines too long to negotiate our driveway. Thanks to Justin Fair for completing this project so beautifully.

Hilde Reno, Interim Chair

Blessings,





Please join us this month at The Well! Our next scheduled day is Saturday, April 21 8:30-11:00 am.. We will be assisting in setting up the free market at the Good Samaritan Inn on Florida Ave., helping clients shop for groceries, entering data and restocking groceries. See you on the 21st!



Nursing home residents request books to read. Any genre. Contact Carmen or bring them by yourself. Fletcher Health and Rehab, 518 W. Fletcher Ave.

Thanks!!



#### **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

7– Danny Williams

12 - Julie Williams

#### **APRIL ANNIVERSARIES**

16 - Yasmin & Brian Tolzman

#### **FINANCES**

#### YEAR TO DATE (February 28 2018):

#### **STEWARDSHIP**

Some verses and thoughts related to your gifts to consider this month.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." **–1 Corinthians 12:4-7** 

What special talents and gifts do you have? Are you good in math? Are languages easy for you? Do you relate well to people? Can you fix things? What gifts have you? Make a list of them. Paul says all our talents are gifts from God. And for what purpose? For the common good! You are the steward of your life and your gifts and talents. Are you making the most of them?

"Lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." -1 Thessalonians 2:12b

Look at how you use the important gifts God has granted you: your time, your energy, your health, your relationships, and your money. Are you using them to live a life worthy of God? That's what stewardship is all about – using all our gifts for Godly purposes. So how you doing?



The Sanctuary at St. Paul Lutheran Church will be open for Meditation at noon on Wednesdays for silent reflection, with chanted psalms and scripture recitation at 12:15 pm.



Please join us for Lunch Bunch on Sunday, April 29, 2018. Look for our next location to be announced in our bulletin. Hope to see you on the 29th!



I would like to thank all the members of St. Paul for their encouragement and appreciation they've shown me, (calls, notes, flowers, coffee mug, note paper, lunch and a ride home with a stop at yogurtology! - due to my temporarily not having a car) during this busy, busy Easter season. I am so blessed to work with you all!!

Peace and blessings,

Evelyn Mennie

# Pray for Healing

Jeanne Cameron member **Dennis Douglas** member **Carmen Hayes** member Fabio & Joyce Toledo & family member Carolyn Kelley member **Teresa Jones** member Jeanne Pursell member Sandi Snow & family member Ron Tillis member Joyce Toledo member Danny Williams member Lynn Bowman former member of St. Paul Lillian Brown mother of Pastor Meyer **Christine Clifton** niece of Tina Fritz Diane Tolzman mother of Wayne Tolzman Ray Garrett father of Curt Fritz Lou Hiza mother of Margaret Tillis **Bishop Chuck Leigh** friend of St. Paul & Faith great niece of Tina Fritz Hailey Miller Gloria Tillis mother of Ron Tillis Alina Toledo daughter in-law of Fabio & Joyce Gary Toledo son of Fabio & Joyce Toledo Donna Reyes aunt of Eddie Malmquist Dot Ward aunt of Eddie Malmquist Lyle Wallin cousin of Jim & Winnie Clark Ed McFadden friend of Jimmy & Eleanor Dunn

Watch dear Lord, with those who wake, watch over, or weep. Tend the sick, rest the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous. In you love give us all this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



# WORSHIP SCHEDULE

#### <u>APRIL</u>

Apr. 1 EASTER AM: Tina Fritz AC: Isaac Fritz Greeters: Wayne & Patty Tolzman USH: Curt Fritz, Brad Haarer, Wayne & Patty Tolzman

#### <u>Apr. 8</u>

AM: Peggy Reineking
AC: Isaac Fritz
Greeters: Brad & Arlynn Haarer
USH: Curt Fritz, Brad Haarer, Wayne & Patty Tolzman
Refreshments: Jeanine Romano

#### <u>Apr. 15</u>

AM: Lewis Balsizer
Acolyte: Rico Gordon
Greeters: Jimmy & Eleanor Dunn
USH: Bob Delach, Jimmy Dunn, Jim Clark, Peggy Reineking
Refreshments: OPEN

Apr. 22 AM: Eddie Malmquist Acolyte: Mariana Gordon Greeters: Federico & Jessica Gordon USH: Bob Delach, Jimmy Dunn, Jim Clark, Peggy Reineking Refreshments: OPEN

<u>Apr. 29</u> AM: Linda Rosche Acolyte: Mariana Gordon Greeters: Wayne & Patty Tolzman USH: Curt Fritz, Brad Haarer, Wayne & Patty Tolzman Refreshments: Lunch Bunch—location to be announced

<u>Altar Guild:</u> Patty Tolzman & Ann Delach <u>Counters:</u> Tina Fritz

#### MAY

May 6 AM: Jeanine Romano AC: Isaac Fritz Greeters: Wayne & Patty Tolzman USH: Bob Delach, Jimmy Dunn, Jim Clark, Peggy Reineking Refreshments: OPEN

May 13 AM: Ann Delach AC: Isaac Fritz Greeters: Brad & Arlynn Haarer USH: Bob Delach, Jimmy Dunn, Jim Clark, Peggy Reineking Refreshments: OPEN

May 20 Day of Pentecost AM: Gabriel Morgan Acolyte: Rico Gordon Greeters: Jimmy & Eleanor Dunn USH: Curt Fritz, Brad Haarer, Wayne & Patty Tolzman Refreshments: OPEN

May 25 Holy Trinity AM: Tina Fritz Acolyte: Mariana Gordon Greeters: Federico & Jessica Gordon USH: Curt Fritz, Brad Haarer, Wayne & Patty Tolzman Refreshments: Lunch Bunch—location to be announced

<u>Altar Guild:</u> Patty Tolzman & Ann Delach <u>Counters:</u> Michael Brannan & Danny Williams

\*\*PLEASE FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR YOUR DAY IF UNABLE TO ATTEND\*\* THANK YOU!

# APRIL 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1st SUNDAY 2 PM Suncoast Area Convention 2-5 Ethopian Church	WEEKLY: 11-1 New Bite of Serenity 6:30pm Together We Can 9 pm Never Too Young MONTHLY: 2nd Monday Sierra Club	WEEKLY: 11-1 New Bite of Serenity 6 pm Men's Literature Study	WEEKLY: 11-1 New Bite of Sereni- ty 5:30pm Sunset Solutions 8 pm New Life	WEEKLY: 11-1 New Bite of Serenity 8 pm A New Way	WEEKLY: 11-1 New Bite of Serenity	WEEKLY: 10am Aging in Recovery 7 pm Triple M Men's
1 EASTER 9:30 Breakfast 10 am Easter Egg Hunt 10:30 am Worship	2	3	4	5 6:30 pm Intro to Meditation/Lounge	6 6:30 pm Pub Theol- ogy	7
8 9:15am Sunday School 10:30amWorship	9	10 7 pm Council	11 12 Noon Meditation 7:45 PM Choir Re- hearsal	12 6:30 pm Intro to Meditation/Lounge	13 6:30 pm Pub Theol- ogy 6:30 pm Wedding Rehearsal	14 3:00pm Wedding
15 9:15am Sunday School 10:30amWorship	16	17	18 12 Noon Meditation 8:00 Choir Rehearsal	19 6:30 pm Intro to Meditation/Lounge 7:30 pm Rebecca Circle	20 6:30 pm Pub Theol- ogy	21 8:30-11am <b>The Well</b> @ Good Samaritan Inn/ Florida Ave.
22 Earth Day 9:15am Sunday School 10:30amWorship	23	24	25 12 Noon Meditation 7:45 Choir Rehearsal	26 6:30 pm Intro to Meditation/Lounge	27 6:30 pm Pub Theol- ogy	28
29 9:15am Sunday School 10:30amWorship/ Lunch Bunch	30 6:30 pm Parish Board Meeting at Faith	27	28 12 Noon Meditation 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	29 6:30 pm Intro to Meditation/Lounge	30	31