

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
201 EAST CHURCH STREET
MARSHALLTOWN, IA 50158



DECEMBER EPISTLE 2022

A Publication of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Christmas Eve Services: 2:00 p.m. via Zoom; 4:00 p.m. in the Church

St. Paul's Staff and Vestry

The Head of the Church, Jesus Christ
The Bishop, The Right Reverend Betsey Monnet
Priest in Partnership, The Reverend Richard Graves
Senior Warden, PJ Colbert
Junior Warden, Nick Lindborg
Parish Administrator, Michael Bayne
Organist, Sharon Morriscal
Andrew Thelen, Pianist
Artist in Residence, Hudson Lourenço

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For further information, contact the church at 641-753-6317.



The Myroshnikov Family

Ukrainians Now Living in Marshalltown

Amid all the darkness of the ongoing tragic war in Ukraine, there are some bright moments that need to be celebrated. The resettlement of this beautiful family to our community by the congregation of Hope United Methodist Church is certainly one of those.

When we offered our **ARTS@STPAUL'S** concert, *The Community Sings*, on September 18, we designated the freewill offering to Ukrainian Relief and looked to support a local project that was involved in this important humanitarian work. After doing some research, we discovered that our Methodist neighbors had an Ukrainian outreach effort in place, so we happily sent them a check for \$200, the offering of our concert.

In a thank you letter we received from Hope United Methodist, Pastor Dani Musselman wrote the following:

‘With your contribution, we are one step closer to building God’s kingdom of love and safety. Your recent gift of \$200 will go towards helping to pay for the family’s expenses since their arrival in America and will help meet their daily needs over the next few months.’

It’s amazing what God can do through of our caring and generosity!

ARTS@STPAUL'S is a fine arts community outreach ministry of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, in Marshalltown, Iowa, promoting experiences of beauty, creativity, and transcendence that hurdle our barriers, slip past our intellects, and penetrate our hearts and souls.



A Christmas Message from Rowan Williams*

**"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God"**

It's a slightly strange way to start a Gospel you might think. We expect something a bit more like the beginning of the other Gospels: the story of Jesus's birth perhaps or his ancestry, or the story of Jesus's arrival on the public scene.

But at the beginning of St John's Gospel what St John does is to frame his whole story against an eternal background. John begins, "In the beginning. . . And what he's saying there is this: as you read this Gospel, as you read the stories about what Jesus does, be aware that whatever he does in the stories you're about to read is something that's going on eternally, not just something that happens to be going on in Palestine at a particular date.

So, when Jesus brings an overflow of joy at a wedding, when Jesus reaches out to a foreign woman to speak words of forgiveness and reconciliation to her, when Jesus opens the eyes of a blind man or raises the dead, all of this is part of something that is going on forever.

The welcome of God, the joy of God, the light of God, the life of God - all of this is eternal. What Jesus is showing on Earth is somehow mysteriously part of what is always true about God.

And that's why it's central to this beginning of John's Gospel - that he says the light shines in the darkness and the darkness doesn't swallow it up. How could the darkness swallow it up?

If these works of welcome and forgiveness, of light and life and joy, are always going on, then actually nothing can ever make a difference to them.

And that's why at the climax of this wonderful passage, St John says, the Word of God, the outpouring of God's life, actually became flesh and blood. And we saw it - we saw in this human life the eternal truth about God. We saw an eternal love, an eternal relationship; we saw an eternal joy and a light and a life.

So, as we read these stories, we know that nothing at all can make a difference to the truth, the reality, they bring into the world. This is indeed the truth; this is where life is to be found.

And this explains why at the end of St John's Gospel, he famously says that if we tried to spell out all that this means, there would be no end of the books that could be written. In the light of that overflowing joy and everlasting truth, I wish you every blessing and happiness for this Christmas and the year ahead.



**Rowan Williams is a Welsh Anglican bishop, theologian, and poet. He was the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, a position he held from December 2002 to December 2012.*



Several years ago, a visit took place between some European Anglican Bishops and some African tribal chiefs who had recently converted to Christianity.

This meeting unfolded over several days and its purpose was to share concerns and increase understanding between the two groups, to address problems and build bonds of friendship. Virtually all the discussion was done through interpreters.

The African tribal chiefs had many immediate needs: the lack of clean drinking water, the scarcity of health care, the persistent problem of hunger, to name a few.

The European Bishops also had concerns, but they were different than the ones voiced by their African counterparts. They listed the growing secularization of society, the excess of materialism, the evil of racism, and the last thing they brought up was loneliness.

Their point was that an increasing number of people living north of the equator were experiencing a profound lack of community. They felt alienated from their neighbors and in some cases from their own families.

After the African Bishops had this topic of loneliness translated to them, they asked for a short break so they could confer with one another.

After the break, one of them rose to speak on behalf of the tribal chiefs in his native dialect. He spoke very briefly.

The European Bishops then looked toward the English translator to learn what the African Bishop had said. What he had said was simply this: "My dear Bishops, we have conferred and concluded that do not have the word *loneliness* in our language."

We of the privileged world have much to learn from those who are poor in things, but rich in relationships. We think that our wealth will make us happy, but as our Buddhist friends like to tell us, that is an illusion.

Jesus also had something to say on this subject of course, but as we approach Christmas, I think we need to look beyond what Jesus said and did and focus rather on the bigger picture -- what Jesus means.

As the prophet Isaiah foretold, "For unto us a child is born, a son is given." God and we are not somehow separated from each other but joined together by the grace and holiness of God entering human life in human form. How can we be lonely when God dwells in our midst?

In theology, we call this child that is born, this son that is given, the Incarnation and because of it all our human brothers and sisters, all created beings, are precious because all participate in this eternal overflowing of grace and holiness come to earth.

Christmas is the antidote to the idea that we are alone, cut off, walking in darkness. We are never alone. Far from it. We are united in God's hereness and dwell in the light of God's holiness.

Why even we and the stars share the same dust.

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Richard

From the Parish Administrator

We have started gathering bids for the masonry and roofing repairs needed for the church building. After an extensive review of the church, Ciro Dilorio and his subcontractors have submitted a bid to us of approximately \$110,000.00 for major repairs to the bell tower and the buttress on the northeast side. I am also in discussion with both Neumann Brothers Construction of Des Moines, who has done a lot of work on the Cathedral there. This morning, Mark Emde from E&H Restoration from Davenport did a preliminary survey to determine the extent of the job - he will submit a bid in the next couple of weeks. All of these firms have experience with working on old limestone buildings.

As you can see, the repairs to our church will not be cheap. Your pledges are of immeasurable value, but the scope of this repair will require us to seek additional funds to pay for the project. Fr. Richard has contacted the Diocesan office and discussed ways which the diocese could assist us in financing this project and they have requested that we provide them with three bids. When we have collected all of them, we can further discuss the monetary possibilities with the bishop's staff.

Speaking of pledges, we are well on our way to meeting our budgeted amount for the year. Your continued support has enabled us to provide for the needs of the congregation and meet the day-to-day expenses involved in running the parish.

The Blessing Box we installed in October has had constant, continual use by needy members of the community. The food and clothing items we put in it are quickly taken and it has been a challenge to keep it stocked. Thanks to all of you who donate to the box - your efforts and contributions are greatly appreciated.

We will decorate the church after the service on December 11th, so if you can please stay after the service and lend a helping hand.

Mike Bayne
Parish Administrator

Christmas at St. Paul's



Christmas Poinsettias can be ordered for the church by filling out the form included below or in your Sunday bulletin.

Please place the payment of \$10.00 along with the order form in the offering plate or return the form with your money to the office.

Additional order forms will be available at the back of the church. Deadline to order is Wednesday, December 14.

2022 POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

If you would like to order a poinsettia wrapped in gold foil for the sanctuary, please fill out the information below. The cost is \$10 per poinsettia. Please place the payment along with the order form in the offering plate or turn it in to the office.

Number ordered _____ The deadline to order is Wednesday, December 14.

In Memory Of: _____

In Thanksgiving For: _____

Given By: _____

If you wish to take your poinsettia home, please do so on Sunday, January 1.



**Sunday, December 11,
Please stay and help to decorate the church after the service.**



Tuesday, December 20, 7:00 p.m.



Saturday, December 24

**Worship via Zoom
2:00 p.m.**

**Worship at. St. Paul's
4:00 p.m. Carol Sing
4:15 p.m. Service**



Prayer Requests

Let us pray for those who have asked for our prayers:

Orlin Klinkefus, Colleen Harmon, Ruth Davis, Dan and Carroll McInroy, Bob & Nancy Petersen, Alice, Sandra Mason, Brian DeSilva, Nan Ryden.

We pray for all the faithful departed, especially Ginny Hunt, that they may be held forever in God's everlasting arms.

We pray for all those celebrating birthdays during the month of December, especially Orlin Klinkefus, Matt Colbert, PJ Joslin, and David Bursley. We also pray for those observing anniversaries, especially, Ev and Mary Jane Halsted and Dan and Carroll McInroy.

We pray for the clergy and people of every parish in our diocese. We also pray for our companion dioceses of Nzara and Swaziland in Africa, and Brechin in Eastern Scotland.

We pray for leaders in every community and nation we entrust with the authority of government, especially for Joseph, our President and Kimberly, our Governor, that they may be filled with the love of truth and righteousness and seek the common good.

We pray for the people of Ukraine, for all those suffering or afraid, that they will soon know justice and peace in their land.

We pray for an end to Coronavirus 19 and for all those working world-wide to care for those who have contracted the virus.



ST. PAUL'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY will unfold on **Thursday, December 8, at the Binford House**. The entire meal is being underwritten, so there will be no charge. Festivities will begin with wine and cheese at 5:30 p.m. and dinner following at 6:30 p.m. Each attendee should bring a reasonably priced, unisex wrapped present, for the Christmas gift exchange.

HOUSE OF COMPASSION SUPPER: Tuesday, December 13. Sign up on the chart at the back of the church. Please arrive at 4:30 p.m.

ARTS@ST.PAULS: We will conclude our first full season of this new outreach program of St. Paul's with a **CHRISTMAS CONCERT ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, AT 7:00 P.M.** This concert will feature an impressive cast of performers: our Artist in Residence, **HUDSON LOURENCO-FELD, organ and piano; DEREK SHIELDS, piano; MICHAEL GABLER, guitar; MARIA GALVAN WIARDA, harp; FRED BUCK, banjo/dobro; ANNIE RUDE, bass; GARY HALVERSON, mandolin/dobro; SHARON MORRICAL, piano, NICK LINDBORG; THE MARSHALLTOWN HIGH SCHOOL HOLIDAY SINGERS, under the direction of AMY OSO; and THE MTUNES VOCAL QUARTET, SCOTT KRATZER, ANDY SCHWANDT, LARRY PFANTZ, AND STACY HEIL.**

VESTRY: Wednesday, December 21, the Vestry will meet at 4:30 p.m. in the Conference Room.

ST. PAUL'S FREE LIBRARY: As our weather begins to chill, **it has been our tradition to offer free winter clothing items to our neighbors through the box we erected that borders Church Street.** If you have gloves or mittens or scarves or thick socks or earmuffs that you would like to share, please bring them to church on Sunday and leave them in the back of the church or call the church office for pick up. Additionally, let's keep filling **THE BLESSING BOX** to benefit the needy living around us.

On the Lighter Side

THE RECTOR DROPS IN ON THE PAGEANT REHEARSAL

