

News N' Notes



ST. Paul's
Lutheran Church, School & Daycare

What God Looks Like

Luke 2:11: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

A pastor once asked this question in a children's talk: What does God look like? One child said: God looks like my daddy. He wears tight clothes and is bald. Another said: God is a big king who sits on a throne and gets to do whatever he wants, like drink Dr. Pepper all day long without his mom saying he can't. Finally one little girl said it best: I think God looks like Jesus. But I'm not sure, 'cause I've never seen Him.

That child was more right than she knew. What does God look like? Remember that question. We'll come back to it. Years ago, a woman was visiting a friend's home in which a little girl had a most excellent doll collection. She asked the little girl: Of all the dolls, which is your favorite? The little girl brought out the most pathetic doll that the woman had ever seen...faced cracked, arm broken, no hair. The woman didn't laugh but she did ask: Why do you love this one the most? The little girl could only confess: If I didn't love her, nobody would.

That little girl, without knowing it, was echoing the words of the Christmas angels. To satan and his damned demons we are prizes to be claimed. To our governments, we are just numbers to be tallied and taxed. To businesses, we are wallets and purses to be emptied. But to our God, we are His special creation who have been marked and messed up by our sins...and it breaks His heart. So our God loved us when nobody else would: **For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.** So, those angels are telling you and me exactly what our God looks like - love.

But get real Decker, nobody knows what love looks like. As a Pastor for 35 years I have seen a whole lot of love. I've seen love
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What God Looks Like

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at weddings and not just between the bride and groom. If you want to see love at a wedding, look at the grandmothers. They're remembering their own wedding day years ago and thinking of how their love saw them through good times and bad.

Yes, I've seen love. I've seen it in the pride of a father describing his ten-year-old developmentally challenged daughter tying her shoes for the first time. I've seen love in an 87-year-old widow leaving her home of 51 years for the nursing home. I've even seen love in the face of a young adult who sheds tears every time she takes Communion. But we sinful human beings have a love that's here today and gone tomorrow.

But not God's love! When Adam and Eve broke the one rule He gave them, our God didn't doom and damn them. He loved their descendants down through every sin, past every slight, in spite of every wrongdoing. Our God loved us down through Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Mary, Joseph and tonight our God is loving those shepherds: ***Unto you is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.*** Want to see what God looks like? Our God looks like a never-ending love.

The shepherds liked what they heard and wanted what was promised. They knew what it's like to live in a world damned by Satan, destroyed by sin, and dominated by slavery. They needed to see the One Who had come. And so the angels even gave them directions: *Go to Bethlehem and you will find God's love wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.* Now we're all guilty of looking for love in all the wrong places, but not the shepherds. In that feeding trough, they found things exactly as promised - an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the shepherds saw more than just a cute kid. They saw God's Love.

Let me ask you this Christmas, have you seen our God's love? This past year, has pain been your constant companion? Have your friends proved faithless? Has your marriage been mangled? Does lasting loneliness and deep dark depression surround you? Have you found nothing in which you can believe and no one in which you can rely? Then, the angel's message is for you. Come--come see this thing which has come to pass. Come look down in the cradle and then look up at the Cross and see what God's Love for you looks like.

Look at God's Love nailed to the Cross for all the times we have hurt others. Look at the Cross and see God's Love hanging naked in order to cover our shame. Look at the Cross and see God's Love bleed out cleansing for all our sins. Look at the Cross and see God's love dying all alone so that God will never abandon, never forsake, never leave us. See God's Love buried but then bursting from the grave to show us that nothing, not deep depression, faithless friends, lasting loneliness, perpetual pain, wrecked relationships, not even death itself, can ever separate us from God's Love. This Christmas come see the cradle and the Cross, come see what God's Love for you looks like.

So again, what does God look like? He looks like the Savior Who loved us when no one else would. He looks like the Savior Who was born in Bethlehem, was wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger, died on the Cross, and rose again to never stop loving us. That's what God looks like. Amen.

Pastor Dan Decker



*St. Paul's
Comfort Dog Ministry*

Waiting . . .

Our Comfort Dog Ministry has been waiting patiently for over a year and a half since it was decided to pursue this ministry, preparing for the actual arrival of our dog. That day could now be in the near future! We still have not been given any dates, but we believe within the next few months there will be a dog in our Comfort Dog Ministry.

Our team continues to prepare ourselves for the responsibilities that will be associated with this ministry, especially seeking God's guidance to use this ministry tool to bring the "Mercy, Compassion, Presence and Proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who are suffering and in need".

This is where we are asking input from you the members of our congregation. Our team has discussed many areas where the comfort dog can be used in our church, school and daycare. We are also planning to reach out to many organizations and establishments in our communities. Some of the ones we have discussed are nursing homes, hospice establishments, homeless shelters, hospitals, fire and police stations, public schools, and libraries. If you have any connections to any of these, or suggestions of other organizations we could take our ministry to, please let us know.

We also are seeking individuals to join our team who are active or retired from law enforcement or the military. You can contact us by email at comfortdog@stpaulsjanesville.com or call either Cheryl Skelly (608-322-1536) or Kathy Overley (608-346-5713). If you would like more information about the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dog Ministry go to their website www.LutheranChurchCharities.org or search LCC Comfort Dogs on Facebook.

You're Invited to Get Involved!

St. Paul's congregation has lots of ways that you can get to know other members and join in the work of God right here in Janesville. Please join one of these organizations:

St. Paul's Ladies Aid will meet on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at 1:30p in Fellowship Hall (the church basement). We help host receptions, as well as raise money for needed items around the church and school.

St. Paul's Altar Guild meets on Wednesday, January, 31, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the School Library. We are responsible for taking care of the altar and setting up for communion.

If you've signed up for flowers during the month of January, you will be contacted by one of the following: Vickie Lloyd (608-921-7307), Jackie Levihn (752-5798); Denise Seklly (608-756-2590) or Sue Michaels (608-756-4508).

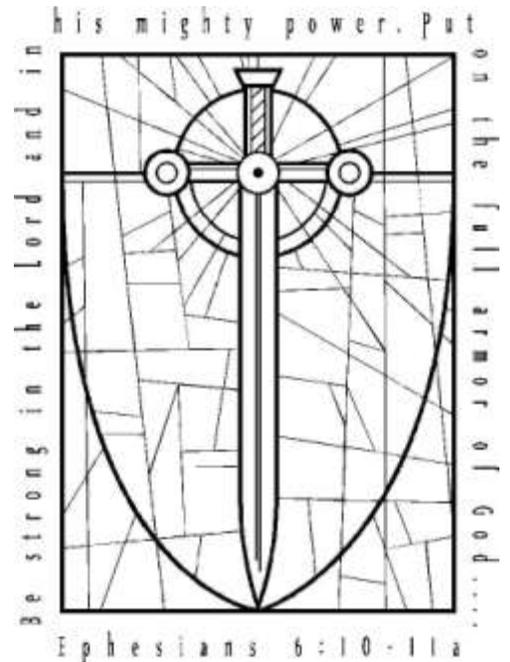
Family WOMEN &

Stand Firm in Faith Bible Study

A new women's Bible Study will begin Wednesday, January 10 at 9a and Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6p. Both studies will be held in Room 202 of St. Paul's School.

We will learn how to equip ourselves with God's truths to be able to stand firm in our faith against the schemes of the devil. We will be focusing on Ephesians 6:10-19.

The cost of the workbook is \$13.00. RSVP to kpingel@stpaulsjanesville.com by Thursday, January 4, 2018, to ensure we have enough workbooks for everyone interested.



Date Night Out

Date Night Out, a fun time for couples to grow and connect in their marriage, begins Monday, January 15, 2018, at 6p in Room 202 of the school.

This relationship study, based on "For Women Only, For Men Only" by Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn, looks at the differences between men and women and how those affect our marriages. You will be offered insights and practical tips for understanding the opposite sex. Men and women will be discussing topics separately and will come back together to wrap up each session.

We'll enjoy appetizers and desserts following our study. A total of 3 sessions will be held. One in January, February, and March. The study ends by going on a group date to a restaurant. Date/place to be determined by the couples that attend.

RSVP by Friday, January 12, 2018, kpingel@stpaulsjanesville.com to reserve your spot. Please indicate if you would like to purchase the accompanying participants guides, which will be a total of \$25.00 for both books.

JLIT Roars Into Town!



It's that time of year again. Cabin fever begins to set in and we are all looking for a diversion---something to keep us occupied during the long winter days and nights. Thankfully, St. Paul's has a special weekend coming up for all of us to look forward to. It's our version of March Madness---the Janesville Lutheran Invitational [Basketball] Tournament, or JLIT for short.

We are hosting our 46th annual A-boys basketball tournament February 23-25, 2018. We invite teams from seven other schools throughout Wisconsin and Illinois to join us for a weekend of competition and camaraderie.

You can help to make this weekend a success! We are looking for volunteers to sell and take tickets for the events as well as monitor the gym entrances. We offer food in Fellowship Hall and need help with preparing and selling food items and cleaning up. Our "Flame Room" is open, selling candy and snacks. We ask for people to serve as "Key People"- these people patrol the hallways during games and make sure that NO players or cheerleaders are in their rooms unsupervised. And of course, after all is said and done, we need people to help clean up in the gym, hallways, and Fellowship Hall. If you can help in any of these areas, please fill out the sign up sheets located in Fellowship Hall (the church basement).

Another need over the weekend are sweet treats for us to sell in Fellowship Hall. St. Paul's is known for our homemade goodies. We need bars, cakes, and pies (NO cookies, please). Dessert donations can be dropped off in Fellowship Hall the Friday of JLIT weekend.

Monetary donations are always welcome, to help us purchase incidentals throughout the weekend. You can bring your donations to the office or drop them in the offering plate during worship services. (Just be sure to mark your envelope: JLIT).

All of the money raised during this weekend is used for many supplies and equipment around school and all of the students benefit. All of the adults who help during the weekend get to meet new people and make new friends. It is truly a wonderful time for all---won't you join us?

*IT'S OUR VERSION OF MARCH MADNESS
---the Janesville Lutheran Invitational [Basketball]
Tournament---
or JLIT for short.*

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran
Church, School
And Day Care

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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Church Council 2017-2018

Bridget Lindau	608-290-1460
Brian Garcia	608-449-4711
Sarah Williams	608-295-2806
Jack Eden	608-751-5999
Jennifer O'Connell	608-359-3544
Nate Simmons	608-436-6720
Jeff Elser	608-752-5120
Tom Neumann	608-756-1978
Laura Manke	608-563-1142

Regular Worship Schedule:

Thursdays at 6:30p
Saturdays at 6p
Sundays at 8a & 10:30a

Official Acts

Baptisms: **Children of Leslieanne (née Warner) Smith**
12-13-2017 Henry Justus Smith, sponsor Jen O'Connell
Sophia Evangelina Smith, sponsor Jill Fenrick
Elizabeth (Betty) Rose Smith, Sponsor Deb Natz
Ebenezer (Rocky) Walker Smith, Sponsor Kristen Gestrich
Judah Shiloh Smith, Sponsor Kathy Pingel

Adult Confirmation:
12-13-2017 Leslieanne Smith

Deaths:
12-07-2017 Dick Lobrano

Membership Changes:
Members transferred from LCMS Congregations:

11-29-2017 Kari Vail (baptized Taylor Murwin) transferred from
St. John Ev. Luth., Edgerton WI
4202 Kingsford Dr, Janesville 53546
608-208-8265

12-13-2017 Angela Baumann transferred from
Immanuel Lutheran, Seymour IN
Hank Baumann (Henry, Bryce and Allison) transferred from
Messiah Lutheran, Beloit WI
3863 Ridge Ct, Janesville 53548
608-208-0313

Members removed by own request:
12-13-2017 Deborah Rozelle
Jackson Wildes and Bernadette Wildes

In Sympathy: Our prayers go out to the family of Shirley Sirek; Dan Uschan on the loss of his mother Linda Uschan; the family of Barbara Prehm; Karl Miller on the loss of his sister Kathy Miller; Lois Apfel on the loss of her husband Jerry Apfel; Mary Schulze on loss of mother Jean Zeilinger; Ryan Huenerberg on loss of grandfather Woody Huenerberg; Kerry Kowal, Karla Spoon, Becky McKillips, and Betty Weaver on loss of mother Betty Wagner; Jack Arnold on loss of sister Carol Strunz; Della Lobrano on loss of husband Dick Lobrano.